THE
EXEMPLARY MOTHER.

Vol. II.

24436
Haet

THE EXEMPLARY MOTHER:

OR,

LETTERS

BETWEEN

Mrs. VILLARS and her FAMILY.

Published by a LADY,

From the ORIGINALS in her Poſſeſſion.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

Printed for T. BECKET and P. A. DE HONDT,
in the Strand. MDCCLXIX.

G.R. III
BRITISH MUSEUM

THE EXEMPLARY MOTHER.

LETTER XLIV.

Mrs. VILLARS to Lady EGERTON.

DEAR MADAM,

I WILL not tell you that I intend to give myſelf the honour of waiting upon your ladyſhip; but with all the confidence of friendſhip acquaint you I feel very great pleaſure in the thoughts of accepting your kind invitation, and that I hope to be in London on the Thurſday in next week.

Accept, dear madam, the acknowledgments my gratitude offers to your ladyſhip. Mr. and Mrs. Stamford ſhare in this ſen-

timent, as well as in my affection and heightened esteem, for the parental care you and they have shewn to my daughter. The tenderness of my Flavia's heart tinctured her conduct with imprudence. She gratefully owns her obligations to your family. She condemns her error, and I hope will atone for it by her future conduct. Your ladyship is too well convinc'd of her regard for you and Mrs. Stamford, to impute her desire of leaving London to a deficiency in the love and gratitude she owes to both. Her ill-requited affection is the motive which prompted the request. She wishes to indulge her grief in solitude; but she must be more disengaged from the object of her tenderness, before she can share the rational pleasures of retirement.

I would not expose my child to the shock of seeing Captain Welmore again. Her reputation, and even her virtue might be endangered by an interview; for her discompolure would be remarkable. But

as he has left town, I have desir'd her to visit with your ladyship, and to partake such of the publick amusements as you recommend.

In young minds, love has generally a romantic byas. I hope my Flavia will conquer her propensity to an illaudible constancy; and that her next choice will be founded on esteem, and supported by the merit of its object.

As I shall soon exchange this intercourse for a personal conference, I shall only subjoin that I am, with respect and gratitude,

Your ladyship's most obliged
and affectionate
SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER XLV.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. VILLARS.

ONE line, my dear Mrs. Villars, to give you some idea of the joy your letter excited. Come, my valuable friend! Men-

tion nothing of obligations. A visit from you is an inestimable favour. I shall part from your dear Flavia with unwillingness, but *your* determinations must be right. She appears more chearful every day, and never refuses to accompany me on any visit, or to any place of diversion. The sweet girl is paler than when she left you, but I assure you the uneasy state of her mind has occasioned this alteration: for her health was perfectly recovered very soon after the sad accident, and my family is unfashionably regular.—My son and daughter share in my satisfaction, and are as much devoted to you as

Your faithfully affectionate

E. EGERTON.

LETTER XLVI.

Mr. VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

I DID not imagine it poſſible that my affection for my dear mother could admit of any increaſe, but I find I was miſtaken. I have read and examined your letter, and the authors you referred me to, till I hope I am a perfect convert. I now deſpiſe that ſet, whoſe loquacity withdrew me from truth and peace. Yet I will not attribute leſs error to myſelf than I really ought to boaſt, nor accuſe them unjuſtly. My *conduct* had been faulty, before they attempted to pervert my *judgment*. I aſſure you, madam, I find a real delight in the duties you recommended. I was at chapel one morning laſt week, when a gay acquaintance went to my room to breakfaſt with me. I met him coming down ſtairs, and deſir'd him to return. Prithee! Villars, ſaid he, pulling me by the ſleeve, and laughing

in my face, haſt been at morning prayers? Why, you are quite a reformed man. Egad, ſaid he, you muſt lay aſide this puritanic cuſtom: and indeed you do look aſham'd. What have you had a lecture from the dowager in the country?——He ſaw I was diſpleaſed, and turned the converſation. Old ſquare toes, ſays he, has deſir'd an account of the money I brought with me to diſcharge my bills. 'Tis all gone without any account. How abſurd to expect a *gentleman* ſhould give himſelf the trouble of ſetting down his expences; beſides, it would not do for his inſpection. Bills at the tavern, poſt chaiſes, white gloves and perfumes, would never anſwer his expectation. No, no, if he is ſurpriz'd, that he has no anſwer, I ſhall tell him his letter miſcarried. When I came firſt to Oxford, truly he would pay the bills himſelf, or my tutor ſhould diſcharge them; but I told him, he ſhew'd a very mean opinion of an only child, or gave people

people a bad one of himſelf, not to let the money paſs thro' his ſon's hands. The good old fellow conſented, the money does *paſs through* my hands, but not into the hands he deſign'd.

I was diſguſted with Mr. E****'s deceit, and aſhamed to have cultivated ſuch an acquaintance. I even ventured to reprove him, tho' perhaps with an ill grace, being conſcious I had encouraged in him, and others, a blameable gaiety. Yet in my gayeſt flights, I never mentioned, nor ſuffered any one to mention your name without the reverence due to your character. Who can forbear laughing, reſum'd Mr. E******* to hear the harangues of a beardleſs philoſopher? What! you are too wiſe I ſuppoſe to make mirth of the antiquated appearance, and ſage maxims of fourſcore, becauſe the old lecturer happens to be a parent. I cannot, anſwer'd I, find any ſubject for merriment, even in the circumſtances you have mentioned. The infir-

mities of age (I repeat the words of an honour'd parent) claim my compaſſion; its unaffected chearfulneſs and friendly advice, my eſteem, gratitude, and love; its piety, my reverence and veneration. There is, *I* added, a reſpect due to every parent; but to thoſe who alſo ſupport the character of the friend, gratitude and love ſhould accompany reſpect.

Mr. E**** pulled out his watch, put on his hat, ſet up the corner of it, and throwing himſelf back in his chair, croſs'd his arms on his breaſt and whiſtled a tune. Then ſtarting up, I am going to the coffee-houſe, Villars, ſaid he, will you go? If I remain here much longer, I ſhall be abſolutely unfit for company. I conſented, and we went together. Since this converſation, the gentleman has behaved very differently. He is leſs familiar, and more reſpectful. The reſt of his companions rallied, but ſoon gave me up as loſt to their ſociety.

I find,

I find, madam, it is not only in my power to purſue my own inclinations, but even in ſome degree to form the manners of thoſe I converſe with. They find me reſolute in avoiding their profligacy. They ceaſe to conſider me as their companion, but they value me as an *acquaintance* and *friend.*——I lately felt a pleaſure in the gaiety of theſe young fellows, which made me deſirous of partaking their amuſements. I indulged this propenſity. I was uneaſy when I allowed myſelf time for conſideration; but I wanted reſolution to withſtand the trial. One laughed at my moderation in entertainments, another at my want of ſpirit in leaving company before morning, a third rallied my inſenſibility to the fair ſex. In ſhort, they ſaw me unſettled, and that I was affected by their ridicule. To avoid, I ventur'd to deſerve it. Still my principles were not conciliated with my practice. But the ſophiſtical arguments of ſome pretended reaſoners perverted the former.

former. Diſſatisfied with myſelf, when left to my own reflections, I applied to you for advice, yet without the deſire of recovering the path from which I had deviated. Happy, if I had been fortified with your precepts, before I had heard the voice of deluſion! But ſince I can't recal, I will endeavour to atone for the paſt. I find I have loſt no valuable friend, by reſuming that moderation my gay aſſociates contemned. My ſuperiors like me the better, for not attempting to vie with them in expence and magnificence. My equals are pleaſed becauſe I treat them without ceremony, and my inferiors becauſe I treat them with leſs haughtineſs. I conform again to the income your goodneſs allows me, and diſclaim the taſte of thoſe who profeſs elegance and Epicuriſm. I reſtrain my natural gaiety, till I am ſufficiently eſtabliſhed to indulge it with propriety.

I have to implore my ſiſter's pardon, for the manner in which I mentioned the miſ-

take

take in her conduct. I had no right to cenſure a leſs culpable action, while I indulged capital errors. But perhaps your prudence concealed my fault. If ſhe knows it, I beg you will be my advocate for her forgiveneſs.

You may depend on my ſincerity in the choice of the ſacred order, and on the rectitude of my intentions.

I am, with the moſt lively ſenſe of your goodneſs,

Dear and honoured madam,
Your dutiful ſon,
and gratefully affectionate
humble ſervant,
FREDERICK VILLARS.

LETTER XLVII.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. VILLARS.

MY DEAR SON,

THE happineſs of a parent depends on the conduct of her children. Judge then of mine on the peruſal of your letter.

letter. Your ſiſter completes my felicity! She is diſengaged from a raſh promiſe by the inconſtancy of her lover, and I have reaſon to believe ſhe will make no future choice without my approbation. She knows nothing of your tranſient unkindneſs. I hope you and ſhe will always remember, that both have an equal ſhare in my affection; and that if it ever be poſſible for me to love one more than the other, the child who preſerves fraternal tenderneſs, will be entitled to the firſt place in my heart.

Perſevere, my dear ſon, in the laudable method of which you already experience the happy conſequence. Reſume that gaiety, which, under proper reſtrictions, has always rendered you agreeable. The beſt preſervative of chearfulneſs is a ſteady adherence to the duties of life. As you have been betrayed into irregularities, you may have contracted debts you are unable to diſcharge. The power of removing any cauſe of uneaſineſs always contributes to my happineſs.

I en-

I enclose an hundred bank note, and intreat you will tell me ingenuously, if this be not sufficient.

I shall set out next week for London with your grandmother, and shall bring your sister back with me. Direct for me at Lady Egerton's. You know, my dear, I always feel a real delight in receiving your letters: A delight, that equals the tender affections which will ever actuate the conduct of

Your happy mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER XLVIII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. GRIFFIN.

WELL, my dear Mrs. Griffin, I am once more happy in Mrs. Villars's company; my last informed you I expected her; she has been in town ten days. Miss Villars received her affectionate parent with looks of confusion, and shed tears as she

ſhe embraced Mrs. Villars. The moſt amiable of women exerted an uncommon degree of chearfulneſs to diſſipate the gloom that hung on her daughter's brow. Miſs Villars, encouraged by ſuch goodneſs, was enlivened to a gaiety I did not think her capable of. Every day ſeems to bring with it an increaſe of ſerenity, and I believe her heart is entirely freed from its late prepoſſeſſion. We have been at two private aſſemblies; and to Greenwich, Hampſtead, &c. I have endeavoured to perſuade Mrs. Villars to conſent to her daughter's continuance in London ſome time longer; and I'll give you the reaſon that induced me to make the propoſal. Mr. Raymond, the only child of Sir Francis Raymond of Dorſetſhire, a man of immenſe fortune, has ſeen my lovely charge, and aſſiduouſly attended her. He was at both the aſſemblies, and the partner of Miſs Villars. His perſon is very agreeable, he is polite, and appears poſſeſſed of a good underſtanding.

ing. I rallied Miſs Villars on her conqueſt. Her heart I believe is not intereſted in his favour, but a little female vanity made her feel pleaſure in attracting the obſervation of a man of Mr. Raymond's importance.

The morning after the laſt aſſembly, when the young lady was retired, I intreated Mrs. Villars would permit her Flavia to ſtay in town, that ſhe might ſecure the affections of Mr. Raymond, who could raiſe her to a ſituation which would properly diſplay her merit. My friend's anſwer was ſo unexpected, and ſo remarkable, that I muſt impart it.

You are very kind, my dear Lady Egerton, ſaid ſhe, in your intentions to promote the intereſt of my child. This is an additional proof of your love for my family. But be not offended if I diſſent from your opinion, and cannot approve her ſtay in town. You are no ſtranger to the diſpoſi-

tion of Sir Francis Raymond. You have heard that he expects his ſon ſhould marry ſome woman of quality, or one who has a very large fortune. Can your ladyſhip imagine then, that he will overlook our deficiencies in both his requiſites? You will ſay, perhaps, the young people may wait the father's death, or that when Sir Francis finds his ſon's happineſs depends on *his* conſent, he will not refuſe it. But as I will not involve my child in a paſſion which would again endanger her peace, and even prompt her to wiſh the death of the only obſtacle to her happineſs; ſo I cannot encourage a clandeſtine addreſs, which would render us unworthy of an alliance with perſons of merit. Flavia has a natural ſoftneſs of diſpoſition, which renders her liable to tender attachments, and to fancy merit where it does not really exiſt; but I hope her late ſufferings and obſervation will aſſiſt her prudence, and preſerve her heart, till ſhe can reſign it with eſteem. I am

ignorant of Mr. Raymond's real character. He has the *forms of politeneſs*, but he may be very deficient in the *eſſentials to happineſs*. Bred up under reſtraint; his natural diſpoſition is ſcarcely diſcoverable. The advantages of rank and fortune are indeed deſirable, as they may diffuſe the prevalence of my child's example, and increaſe her power of communicating happineſs; but I would likewiſe wiſh her huſband to be truly amiable. Mr. Stamford has ſome acquaintance with Mr. Raymond, and I wiſh he could caſually inform the latter of my daughter's real ſituation. If the young gentleman makes any propoſal to my daughter, or to me, we ſhall give him a determinate anſwer. My Flavia will not trifle with his affection.

You find, madam, I take the liberty of diſcloſing *my* ſentiments, though they are contrary to *yours*. I am truly grateful for the motive that influenced you.

tion of Sir Francis Raymond. You have heard that he expects his ſon ſhould marry ſome woman of quality, or one who has a very large fortune. Can your ladyſhip imagine then, that he will overlook our deficiencies in both his requiſites? You will ſay, perhaps, the young people may wait the father's death, or that when Sir Francis finds his ſon's happineſs depends on *his* conſent, he will not refuſe it. But as I will not involve my child in a paſſion which would again endanger her peace, and even prompt her to wiſh the death of the only obſtacle to her happineſs; ſo I cannot encourage a clandeſtine addreſs, which would render us unworthy of an alliance with perſons of merit. Flavia has a natural ſoftneſs of diſpoſition, which renders her liable to tender attachments, and to fancy merit where it does not really exiſt; but I hope her late ſufferings and obſervation will aſſiſt her prudence, and preſerve her heart, till ſhe can reſign it with eſteem. I am

ignorant of Mr. Raymond's real character. He has the *forms of politeneſs*, but he may be very deficient in the *eſſentials to happineſs*. Bred up under reſtraint; his natural diſpoſition is ſcarcely diſcoverable. The advantages of rank and fortune are indeed deſirable, as they may diffuſe the prevalence of my child's example, and increaſe her power of communicating happineſs; but I would likewiſe wiſh her huſband to be truly amiable. Mr. Stamford has ſome acquaintance with Mr. Raymond, and I wiſh he could caſually inform the latter of my daughter's real ſituation. If the young gentleman makes any propoſal to my daughter, or to me, we ſhall give him a determinate anſwer. My Flavia will not trifle with his affection.

You find, madam, I take the liberty of diſcloſing *my* ſentiments, though they are contrary to *yours*. I am truly grateful for the motive that influenced you.

I bluſhed at my want of judgement, but readily own'd my friend's ſuperiority. How ſhall I ſubmit to a ſeparation? But ſhe has fixed an early day, and I muſt not attempt to alter her reſolution. The ſweet Flavia too! I muſt loſe her. But I lament her departure leſs than her dear mother's. I might be diſtreſt to know how to act, was Mr. Raymond to addreſs her; I therefore reſign her to the guidance of wiſdom.

Mrs. Villars paſſes my door. I attend you, my valuable friend, as ſoon as I have ſubſcrib'd myſelf dear Mrs. Griffin's

Ever affectionate

E. EGERTON.

LETTER XLIX.

Mr. SPENCER to Mrs. VILLARS.

I AM inexpreſſibly concerned, madam, that my duty can't be fulfilled without giving you pain. My pupil's regular behaviour ſince the receipt of your letters afforded me real joy, and I had no ſuſpicion that he had involved himſelf in any criminal engagement. Yeſterday I obſerved him in earneſt converſation with a young lady in Magdalen walks. I had never before ſeen him attentive to the fair ſex; but the ſparkling glances he caſt on this lady, convinced me he loved her. I avoided meeting them, that I might continue my remarks. All Mr. Villars's thoughts centered in his companion, to whom I was an entire ſtranger. Her looks inſpired me with admiration, and even tenderneſs. They were expreſſive of a ſoft melancholy.

As I ſtood gazing on them, a fellow tutor of our college ſlapt me on the ſhoulder. What deep problem are you ſolving? ſaid he, or are you admiring the magnetic power of beauty upon your young pupil? This is not your firſt obſervation of the affair. Why, man, to my certain knowledge, Villars keeps this girl, and meets her very often at a friend's houſe.

The information ſhocked me. How can you, ſaid I, ſpeak ſo lightly of this affair? On this young man's proper conduct depends the happineſs of a worthy family. He has a mother, the moſt virtuous and prudent of her ſex.—Pho! replied he, peeviſhly, *I* am forced to overlook many wildneſſes in *my* pupils; this is a folly that will cure itſelf.—He then turned away. Mr. Villars and the lady had left the walks, and I returned to college. I did not ſee him till the afternoon, when I abruptly aſked him, who

was

was the lady he was walking with? His confusion was evident, and he made no answer. Again, I requested to know the foundation of their acquaintance, and hinted my fears. He was still silent. You must pardon me, sir, added I, if I suspect an improper connection, and if I impart my suspicions to Mrs. Villars, unless you remove them, by making me your confidant. After repeated solicitations for his reply, You must do as you please, sir, said he, I have nothing to impart. He then hastily quitted the room.

I leave it to your prudence, madam, to interrogate your son. He loves you tenderly, and has even appeared delighted with a rational scheme of life.

I interest myself in his and your happiness; and am, madam,

Your obedient and faithful
humble servant,
H. SPENCER.

LETTER L.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. VILLARS.

YOU will expect a letter from me, my dear ſon, after Mr. Spencer's information. You probably fear my reproaches, but you have only excited my pity, and occaſioned my tears. Muſt I addreſs my child as the corrupter of innocence? Muſt I accuſe my ſon of being the cauſe of a family's miſery? Where is the animating principles of chriſtian benevolence? I muſt become the advocate of an unknown ſufferer, and intreat you by every plea religion can urge, to make all the reparation in your power for the injury. Have you deluded her by your vows? Honour requires you to fulfil them. If ſhe made the ſacrifice of virtue, without any promiſe from you, yet you ſhared the crime, inſtead of being her ſupport in weakneſs. But you muſt have contributed to heighten her paſſion, or ſhe could not ſurely have been

been guilty of ſuch a deviation. If then you can reſolve, in the character of the huſband, to atone for the error of the ſeducer, do not delay an act of juſtice. Reſtore peace to an unhappy family, and with the partner of your guilt, endeavour to reconcile yourſelf to an offended God.

If the young perſon is unworthy of being your wife, (alas! why did you then conſpire againſt her return to virtue) do not increaſe your mutual crime by another interview. If her circumſtances be a ſnare to her, I will enable you to ſettle ſomething towards her future ſubſiſtance. How many young creatures has want betrayed into indiſcretion!

Your ſatisfaction in the performance of the duties I recommended, appeared to me a ſecurity for the rectitude of your future conduct. My diſappointment affects me more than I can expreſs. Oh! my child, may a juſt conviction of your

error awaken remorſe, and your penitence produce a ſteady perſeverance!

You refuſed to gratify Mr. Spencer's friendly curioſity; but you *muſt* comply with the intreaties of a tender parent, who, till ſhe is aſſured of your ſincere repentance, muſt remain,

Your unhappy, yet
affectionate mother,
SOPHIA VILLARS.

P. S. Your ſiſter, who is ignorant of the ſubject of my letter, ſends her love.

LETTER LI.

Mr. VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

WHILE I feel a tender concern for being the occaſion of my dear mother's uneaſineſs, it gives me a delightful emotion to reflect, that I can truly aſſure her, Miſs Leiceſter's honour is unviolated. You ſhall be the confidant, dear madam, of my ſecrets. I have a long ſtory to tell,

and

and ſuch is my inquietude at preſent, I know not how to tell it.

It is above half a year ſince I met, on a viſit, a young lady, who charmed me by her beauty and accompliſhments. I improved the acquaintance. A coquettiſh turn in Miſs Rochford, (that is her name) encouraged my addreſs; till, being aſſured the conqueſt was compleated, ſhe treated me with diſdain. Miſs Leiceſter (a young lady who viſited Miſs Rochford) I could obſerve, diſapproved my fair one's conduct. She even remonſtrated on the injuſtice, and uncertainty of her behaviour. The hints dropt by the little coquette, who deſpiſed the reproof, convinced me of Miſs Leiceſter's intended good offices, but I ſuffered for her interpoſition. The inexorable beauty triumphed in her power of giving pain, and for ſome weeks I ſupported her indignities.

One evening I met her at a private ball; I aſked the favour of her hand, but

ſhe

ſhe refuſed it. No, ſhe had ſprained her ancle, and could not dance. Miſs Leiceſter was preſent. The haughty looks of my tyrant awakened my reſentment. I begged Miſs Leiceſter would accept me for a partner. She ſeemed ſurprized, but with an air of ſweet complacency mixed with the dancers. Miſs Rochford coloured from vexation, yet drew up her head, and tried to aſſume a ſtately indifference. An officer ſoon after aſking her to dance, ſhe complied without heſitation. Her behaviour was ſo ridiculouſly affected, that I was diſguſted; and contemned, what before I had almoſt idolized. I compared my amiable partner with this capricious beauty, and her merit was heightened by the contraſt. Her features ſcarce leſs regularly charming, were animated by ſuch an expreſſive glow of delicate ſenſibility, as gained univerſal affection, and inſpired with the ſofteſt regard every diſengaged heart. Even the paſſionate lover of Miſs

Rochford

Rochford had felt a fraternal tenderneſs for Miſs Leiceſter. This evening releaſed me from my firſt chains, to rivet me in gentler, yet indiſſoluble fetters.

Miſs Leiceſter, who ſaw the affectation of the haughty fair, and imagined I ſuffered from it, aſked me, in a tone of ſweetneſs, if it was in her power to replace me in favour. I could not help telling her, it was in her power to make me happy, but that I diſdained a favour from Miſs Rochford. She bluſhed, caſt down her eyes, and was ſilent. I would not attempt any further explanation that night, leſt ſhe ſhould conſider it only as an effect of diſappointed love. Miſs Leiceſter left the company early, and Miſs Rochford, fearful I ſuppoſe, from my inattention, that ſhe ſhould loſe her captive, played off all her attractions. I will confeſs, that for ſome moments my heart revolted, on the appearance of kindneſs. She obſerved it, and believing I was too much her ſlave to

eſcape

escape her wiles, thought there would be more glory in securing a new conquest, than in exerting her power over the vanquished. One sigh escaped me: I wished that she was possessed of Miss Leicester's disposition; but the idea of that lovely person and angelic mind, confirmed my better resolutions. I retired to my room and revolved the behaviour of Miss Rochford, her haughtiness, artifice, and insensibility. The charming Isabella's perfections then arose to my delighted remembrance, and my heart joyfully confessed her superiority.

I waited on Miss Leicester the next morning. She received me with unaffected diffidence. Afraid of being interrupted, I soon imparted my love, the reason of my change, and the esteem on which my present passion was founded. She heard me with pleas'd attention. I enjoyed the soft confusion. It was some time before she spoke. At last, Your good

opinion,

opinion, ſir, ſaid ſhe, is very grateful to a perſon who always had an high eſteem for your merit; but, Mr. Villars, pardon me, if I entertain a doubt of the real alteration in your heart. Miſs Rochfort has excited your reſentment, and you think your love extinguiſhed. The conſequence of your miſtake may be the deſtruction of your peace, if I accept the vows you offer. Let me then, ſir, be an interceſſor with Miſs Rochford, to reſtore you to favour; or, if ſhe has injured you, permit me to uſe my endeavours to convince her of her fault. I aſſure you, it will give me pleaſure to contribute to her and your happineſs, and I really believe (however love of admiration may have betrayed her into inadvertencies) that Miſs Rochford will condemn, and correct her foibles, if ſhe become wife to a man of your real merit.

Amiable creature! exclaimed I, how ſuperior are you to that giddy fair one! Be aſſured

aſſured the change in my ſentiments is the reſult of mature conſideration, and I am more confirmed in my choice by every word you utter.

Miſs Leiceſter then deſired that, to ſecure the happineſs of both, ſhe might make ſome trial of my perſeverance. She requeſted, that I would not viſit at the houſe, nor expect any encouragement from her, till ſhe could depend on the ſincerity and conſtancy of my affection. I promiſed compliance, but begg'd ſhe would ſometimes permit me to ſee her at a friend's houſe whom I named, where I would only behave as a common acquaintance. I alſo intreated, I might be allowed to ſpeak to her when we met in the walks, and that I might then, if unobſerved, breathe forth my vows. She bluſh'd conſent. Every interview has increaſed my love and eſteem.

Miſs Rochford, to whom I paid a farewel viſit, and adviſ'd a different conduct to future admirers, after unſucceſsfully exerting

erting all her arts to recal me, endeavoured to find out her rival. One day laſt week, ſhe met Miſs Leiceſter at the lady's I have mentioned, and ſoon after they were ſeated, I enter'd the room with an acquaintance of the family. Miſs Leiceſter bluſhed, and the watchful Miſs Rochford inſtantly ſuſpected the truth. I ſaw ſhe did. Her eyes ſparkled with anger. She would not deign to caſt a look at me, and behaved with ſuch ſtudied rudeneſs to Miſs Leiceſter, that I could not help expreſſing my reſentment by a ſarcaſm on coquetry, affectation, and ill-nature. She was irritated, and darted at me a diſdainful glance. She ſoon after took leave, and as ſhe paſſed, whiſper'd me, loud enough to be heard by Miſs Leiceſter, that ſhe would die to be revenged. My amiable Iſabella, as ſhe went down ſtairs, hinted her fears of Miſs Rochford's implacability. I calmed her uneaſineſs, but found my own almoſt inſupportable. A

day

day or two after, a gay companion congratulated me upon the happineſs of poſſeſſing ſuch a woman as Miſs Leiceſter. I was ſo ſhocked and confounded, it was ſome time before I could aſk him, who could be the inventor of ſuch a falſehood. He prevaricated a while; but on my inſiſting that he ſhould tell me his informer, or he would incur my ſuſpicions of having forged the ſtory, he confeſſed it came originally from Miſs Rochford, who aſſerted it with the ſtrongeſt aſſeverations. I aſſured him the malice of an incenſed coquette had formed and ſpread this tale. I own'd I loved Miſs Leiceſter, but that ſhe was the moſt perfect pattern of innocence and purity, and had not even given me an aſſurance of the regard I ſolicited. My fellow ſtudent promiſed he would endeavour to refute the ſlander.

I happen'd to meet Miſs Leiceſter that morning in Magdalen walks. A ſettled melancholy ſat upon her ſweet features. I

aſked

aſked the reaſon, but ſhe cou'd not tell me. Her voice faultered, when ſhe attempted to ſpeak. I gueſſed ſhe had heard the vile inſinuation, and gently mention'd it. Her confuſion increas'd, but ſhe expreſs'd no ſurprize. She own'd this was the cauſe of her uneaſineſs. I begg'd ſhe would no longer harbour any doubts of my ſincere attachment, and wiſhed ſhe was of age, that we might that moment plight our hearts and hands before the altar.

What! Sir, ſaid ſhe, with a look of delicate concern, would you then have me confirm the unfavourable opinion Miſs Rochford has inſpir'd the town with by an haſty and a private marriage? and without the approbation of our friends? No, Mr. Villars, conſult your mother and my father. If they conſent, my heart is firmly your's, and, in proper time, my perſon ſhall be ſo too: if they diſapprove, we muſt never meet again!

Here her fortitude failed. Her tears flowed abundantly. I seized her hand; Oh! my Isabella, said I, may I attribute these tears to some tenderness for me? I can no longer conceal it, answered she. You *are* dear to me: But no more on this subject, till we receive a proper sanction. Farewell!

She then put her handkerchief to her eyes, and waved her hand, as she turned from me. My soul was so agitated with love and resentment, that I scarcely knew which I should first indulge; but the former prevailed. I went to Mr. Leicester's early in the afternoon, and enquired for him; but was told he had left Oxford that morning with his daughter, and the servant was ignorant where he was gone. I ask'd at the post-house, and heard he had taken a chaise to Woodstock. I ran back to college, to equip myself for a journey. Mr. Spencer then sent for me. I could not make him my confidant, lest he should pre-

vent

vent my intended purſuit. The moment I eſcaped, I mounted a poſt-horſe and almoſt flew to Woodſtock. I could hear nothing of the chaiſe. I return'd to Oxford, but it was not come back. I ſet out again the next morning, and came back unſucceſsful. I went to the poſt-maſter, who told me Mr. Leiceſter went to * * * * * * * * * where he hired another chaiſe, and immediately ſet off again, after giving the Oxford poſt-boy a bribe to ſtay out all night, and not return till the next night. I was now quite at a loſs, and my ſpirits were too much diſcompoſed to write to you. I went to the houſe of Miſs Rochford to demand ſome information of the conſequences of her diabolical influence, but ſhe denied herſelf. Your letter was brought to me on my return. A gleam of joy darted thro' my ſoul, on the conſciouſneſs that I was not the villain I have been repreſented. I ſat down immediately to anſwer it; but now all my anxiety returns. What can

I do? How ſhall I recover my lovely Iſabella and vindicate her fame?

* * * * *

Oh! madam, I have received a letter from the dear creature! Mr. Leiceſter's ſervant brought it. I knew her again, and haſtily aſk'd from whence it came. She told me the outſide cover was directed to her, and that it was Mrs. Griffin's hand, Miſs Leiceſter's aunt. I diſmiſſed the girl with a handſome preſent, and eagerly open'd the letter. Theſe were the contents.

SIR,

IT is impoſſible to expreſs what I have ſuffered ſince I was ſo precipitately forc'd from Oxford, and it has not been my leaſt motive of uneaſineſs that you have ſhared in it. Miſs Rochford has been the cauſe of this haſty procedure. My aunt Griffin, whom you have often heard me mention, and who had been with us about

a week

a week before we left Oxford, melted by my complaints and intreaties, has at laſt informed me, that it was Miſs Rochford who infuſed into my father's mind the poiſon of ſuſpicion. And by ſuch a tale! Good God! how is it poſſible that human nature can be ſo depraved, and that a female breaſt ſhould harbour ſuch deſtructive paſſions!

My father's anger was excited almoſt to madneſs. He informed my aunt of the ſhocking ſtory, and concerted with her the means of an immediate ſeparation. In conſequence of their ſcheme, as ſoon as I returned from you, I was hurried into a poſt-chaiſe with my father and aunt, and ignorant of their deſign, had nothing leſt but compliance. My father's countenance wore the traces of his diſcompoſure and reſentment, and even my aunt ſpoke to me with harſhneſs. Shocked at this reception, I begg'd to know the reaſon, but could obtain no other anſwer than, Infa-

mous girl!—Vile ſeducer!—I ſuſpected his meaning, yet could not believe Miſs Rochford capable of ſuch wickedneſs. I attempted to juſtify myſelf, but was enjoined ſilence in a tone that made me tremble. I had heard my father mention Woodſtock, but when we were about a mile from Oxford, he gave orders for a contrary road, and ſatisfied all the poſt-boy's objection.—We are now in London, at the houſe of a relation of my late uncle; but my father's deſign I underſtand is to fix his reſidence in town.

Oh! Sir, he thinks my virtue and reputation loſt, and that I ſhould become the prey of ſome other deluder, if I was to return to Oxford! How ſhall I reinſtate myſelf in his favour? I have thrown myſelf at his feet, but in vain. Even my aunt has not yet been a ſucceſsful advocate, but ſhe does not deſpair; I have ſhewed her thoſe copies of your mother's letters, and the poetry, you gave me leave to take,

with

with which ſhe is charmed, particularly with that letter which effected your converſion. To Mrs. Villars's character I found ſhe was no ſtranger, having had for many years a correſpondence with Lady Egerton, who it ſeems is an intimate friend of your mother's. Your anſwer to that letter I imparted, and ſaw ſhe was pleaſed with it. She has got all of them for my father's peruſal, when ſhe can find a proper opportunity of diſcloſing them. She thinks you ought to take ſome method of convincing him of your honourable intentions. My confidence in the ſincerity of your affection induces me to be perfectly ingenuous. Indeed this ſituation requires from you an explicit confeſſion.

My kind aunt will direct and incloſe this letter to our ſervant at Oxford. I thank heaven my innocence is unſtained, and your honour inviolate. Delightful reflection! Yet we have been blameable in concealing our regard from thoſe to whom

an unreſerved explanation was due. But I own I fear'd your inconſtancy, and wiſhed to be convinced of your faithful attachment. I have ſeverely ſuffered for the trial. If you feel for me the love you have profeſſed; if ſentiments of generoſity ſtill animate your ſoul; and if you ſympathize in the diſtreſs you have occaſioned, you will not delay removing the uneaſineſs which now oppreſſes the heart of

Your ſincerely faithful friend,

ISABELLA LEICESTER.

Pray direct to my aunt, at Mr. R——s, Hatton-Garden.

"Her heart is oppreſſed:"—Deareſt excellence! "If I feel for her the love profeſſed," Can ſhe doubt it? "*I* have "occaſioned her uneaſineſs." Dreadful reflection! *I*, who would lay down my life to promote her tranquillity! What means ſhall I purſue? Oh! madam, was you with me, your wiſdom would direct me; now I have no adviſer!

Hark!—

Hark!—Some impertinent is knocking at my door.

* * * * *

ONCE more, madam, I have a proſpect of happineſs. Mr. Spencer will be my advocate. I might have aſked his advice; but his goodneſs is greater than I could expect. He came to tell me, he ſets out this morning for London, to reſign his noble charge Lord M—— to his father. He expects to be in town to-morrow noon. I inſtantly formed a ſcheme. I gave him a detail of all I have related, and added an earneſt requeſt, that he would plead for me with all the energy of a lover. I told him I was certain of your gratitude for his kind offices. He has undertaken my defence. He is acquainted with Mr. Leiceſter, and even eſteemed by him. He promiſed to exert all his eloquence, to remove the prejudices of his friend; and aſſured me he would impart the reſult of his interceſſion the very earlieſt moment. I

had

had only time to ſcribble a few lines to my beloved, to renew my vows of conſtancy; expreſs my agonies at her ſufferings, and my hopes of an happy event.

Mr. Leiceſter poſſeſſes eaſy fortunes, which were chiefly acquired in the diſcharge of his profeſſion, having been an eminent ſurgeon, but reſigned buſineſs a few years ſince on account of ill health. The extravagance of a ſon, who is lately dead, involved his family in ſome difficulties, from which he is now extricated by his prudence. Mrs. Leiceſter died about a year ſince, and Miſs Leiceſter has been almoſt a recluſe from that time.

I will conclude, and ſend away this letter to relieve the anxiety you feel, till convinced of my innocence. I ſhall eagerly expect your forgiveneſs, and hope for your approbation, to complete my happineſs.

I am,

deareſt and ever honoured madam,

Your dutiful ſon,

and grateful humble ſervant,

FREDERICK VILLARS.

LETTER LII.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. VILLARS.

THANKS to heaven my ſon is innocent of the crime of which he was ſuſpected! I have only to accuſe his want of confidence. Why, my dear child, did you not permit your fond mother to realize your hopes and diſſipate your fears? She has felt all the ſolicitudes of tenderneſs, and all the delights of a ſentimental paſſion; a paſſion confirmed by the conjugal tye, and which flouriſhed even in the decline of youth and bloom. A parent, whoſe ſtudy it has ever been to promote the happineſs of her children, might reaſonably expect to be conſulted in an engagement of ſo ſolemn a nature as that of marriage; but Miſs Leiceſter's fears of your inconſtancy, whilſt they afford an excuſe for her concealment of your profeſſions, render your reſerve leſs blameable. Had I been intruſted with your ſecret, I

ſhould

had only time to ſcribble a few lines to my beloved, to renew my vows of conſtancy; expreſs my agonies at her ſufferings, and my hopes of an happy event.

Mr. Leiceſter poſſeſſes eaſy fortunes, which were chiefly acquired in the diſcharge of his profeſſion, having been an eminent ſurgeon, but reſigned buſineſs a few years ſince on account of ill health. The extravagance of a ſon, who is lately dead, involved his family in ſome difficulties, from which he is now extricated by his prudence. Mrs. Leiceſter died about a year ſince, and Miſs Leiceſter has been almoſt a recluſe from that time.

I will conclude, and ſend away this letter to relieve the anxiety you feel, till convinced of my innocence. I ſhall eagerly expect your forgiveneſs, and hope for your approbation, to complete my happineſs.

I am,

deareſt and ever honoured madam,

Your dutiful ſon,

and grateful humble ſervant,

FREDERICK VILLARS.

LETTER LII.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. VILLARS.

THANKS to heaven my ſon is innocent of the crime of which he was ſuſpected! I have only to accuſe his want of confidence. Why, my dear child, did you not permit your fond mother to realize your hopes and diſſipate your fears? She has felt all the ſolicitudes of tenderneſs, and all the delights of a ſentimental paſſion; a paſſion confirmed by the conjugal tye, and which flouriſhed even in the decline of youth and bloom. A parent, whoſe ſtudy it has ever been to promote the happineſs of her children, might reaſonably expect to be conſulted in an engagement of ſo ſolemn a nature as that of marriage; but Miſs Leiceſter's fears of your inconſtancy, whilſt they afford an excuſe for her concealment of your profeſſions, render your reſerve leſs blameable. Had I been intruſted with your ſecret, I

ſhould

ſhould have adviſed you to evince your ſincerity, by conſulting the preſervation of Miſs Leiceſter's peace, which muſt ſuffer by a clandeſtine acquaintance. Your conduct then would have been as meritorious, as the object of your love is deſerving. You would have convinced her of the purity, diſintereſtedneſs and conſtancy of your attachment, and even Mr. Leiceſter muſt have acknowledged that you deſerved his daughter. But whilſt I expatiate on the ſuggeſtions of duty, I am not inſenſible to pleas of love. I pity you and the amiable Miſs Leiceſter, and will do every thing in my power to ſecure your happineſs.

How cruel is it to ſolicit the poſſeſſion of an heart, and yet to inſinuate doubts, which ought to be removed, before ſuch a ſolicitation can be urged with propriety! If the ſuperiority of fortune is on the man's ſide, and may be an obſtacle to his happi-

neſs

neſs from the diſapprobation of parents, it is an inſult to offer his vows till he is certain he ſhall be permitted to fulfil them. I hope, my dear, you have never excited apprehenſions in Miſs Leiceſter, that I can refuſe compliance with any propoſal that ſeems likely to contribute to your happineſs. If I had ever obſerved in you any particular propenſity, with which your preſent views in life would be inconſiſtent, I ſhould think it my duty to remonſtrate, but never to compel. It is your part to determine. But I know no inclination in you which is not laudable. You are formed to enjoy the higheſt conjugal felicity. You poſſeſs that delicate ſenſibility, and refined tenderneſs, of which few of your ſex are capable, and which rendered your father truly amiable. May you, in every particular, reſemble that excellent original, and your Iſabella will be one of the happieſt of women. I have no more to wiſh for in this life than to ſee you and my Flavia

bleſſing, and making bleſt, two worthy partners of your hearts.—Write to me, my dear ſon, as ſoon as you can convey any further information; and be aſſured, that only your own impatience can exceed that of

Your ever affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER LIII.

Mr. VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

Deareſt and ever honour'd MADAM.

Thurſday.

HAVE you not accuſed me of ingratitude, when after having received ſo many favours, I appeared deficient in returning my due acknowledgments? But you will acquit me when you know the reaſon of my ſilence. In the utmoſt eagerneſs of expectation did I paſs the third day after Mr. Spencer's departure.

My

My imagination carried him on the evening of the ſecond to Mr. Leiceſter, when I hoped he would obtain his friendly purpoſe. That night I expected he would write, but I was diſappointed. The fourth day is paſt.

" Another and another has ſucceeded,
" And each new day more dreadful than the
" former!"

I am almoſt diſtracted with fears, and determine to follow my tutor to morrow.

* * * * * *

Friday morning. I have ſent to the office to know my fate.—Ha! a letter for Mr. Villars! It is the long-expected epiſtle. Yet my impatience is ſuſpended by my apprehenſions. I have held the letter ſome moments unopened. My heart throbs, and I feel an univerſal tremor.

* * * * * *

My ſpirits are revived. I broke the ſeal haſtily, and on a ſecond peruſal I think I can perfectly diſtinguiſh theſe lines.

DEAR SIR,

I doubt I have occaſioned you many anxious fears, and can aſſure you I have ſuffered on your account; but my recital will recompence your uneaſineſs. I went to the houſe you directed me to, the day after my arrival. Mr. Leiceſter was not at home, being gone with his ſiſter and daughter into the country, and was expected to return the next day. I intended to wait on him then, but attending lord M*** to Hampton-court in the morning, with deſign of returning to dinner in town, his lordſhip was detained by an attack of a fit. The fifth day after I left you, we came back to London; but the earl having company, intreated I would ſit with his ſon in his own apartment, not thinking he was ſufficiently recovered to be able to mix in a noiſy company. Early the next morning I waited on Mr. Leiceſter, and found him at home; he expreſſed much pleaſure at ſeeing me, but

there

there was a viſible melancholy impreſſed upon his countenance. When I opened my deſign, he ſhewed the utmoſt impatience and reſentment, but as I proceeded he grew more calm, and at laſt confeſſed he had injured his daughter and you.

I have ſeen ſome letters, ſaid he, written by Mr. Villars's mother, which are excellent compoſitions. I alſo read one of the young man's, which a libertine could hardly be capable of inditing. My ſuſpicions vaniſhed for a time, but returned again on conſidering, that men frequently aſſume a maſk even of religion to diſguiſe the worſt purpoſes, and that love has tempted many people to commit crimes they would have condemned in another. I own my anger was rouſed by your interpoſition; but your management, or the goodneſs of your cauſe has overcome me. My dear child! I have then been unjuſt to thee! I acted imprudently in withdrawing thee from Oxford upon mere conjec-

June, and perhaps have hurt thy reputation more than that malicious girl has done—I long to embrace my Isabella—I stopt him till I had prepared the young lady, which I did by Mrs. Griffin's means. She blushed when I approached her, and when I repeated my success, her eyes overflowed. She lifted them to heaven in speechless gratitude. As soon as she was somewhat composed; Am I restored, said she, to my father's love? Have you vindicated my fame, my virtue? Oh! Mr. Spencer, my guardian angel!

She then rushed past me, and running into the dining room, threw herself at her father's feet, before I could overtake her. My father! my dear dear father! was all she could say. The old gentleman was deeply affected. Tears trickled down his reverend face, he hung over her with looks of love. Never before did I see so moving a scene! Mrs. Griffin supported her lovely niece, who seemed almost fainting.

Oh!

Oh! my child, cry'd the tender parent, forgive my injuſtice!—Forgive you, ſir! anſwered Miſs Leiceſter. Ah! do not entertain the leaſt doubt of my love and veneration. To be reſtored to your affection, is joy inexpreſſible.——She was unable to add more, and a ſervant entering the room with a letter, ſhe haſtily aroſe, and turned to the window.

Mr. Leiceſter took the letter, and as he read it, Amazing generoſity! ſaid he: Amiable woman!—excellent mother! Theſe exclamations excited Miſs Leiceſter's curioſity, or rather ſeemed intereſting to her heart; ſhe gently ſtepped forwards, her eyes ſparkled through her tears, and her cheeks glowed with pleaſing hope.

Come, my Iſabella, cry'd the fond parent, come and ſhare the admiration and eſteem I feel for the worthy mother of Mr. Villars. Her ſon has now a genteel ſufficiency, and will have an handſome income when he takes poſſeſſion of his

living. Her generous propoſal, if I conſent to your marriage, is, that he and you ſhould live with her till Mr. Villars can be inducted into the living. But I will give you ſome of her own words.

"My children have a right to every "thing in my power to beſtow, and I can-"not delay conferring it upon them, till "ſome remote contingencies take place, "when their merit and the tyes of blood "have the earlieſt claim to my regard; "but as they are too good to wiſh I "ſhould diſtreſs myſelf to increaſe their "fortunes, ſo I muſt confeſs I think it "imprudent in any parent to involve "herſelf in a ſtate of dependence on a "child. I ſhall therefore reſerve what "I deem ſufficient for my purpoſes in life, "and ſhall think it an addition to *my* "happineſs to be a conſtant obſerver of "my *ſon*'s, in that union which (I know "experimentally) is beſt calculated for "the enjoyment of the higheſt temporal "felicity.

" felicity. Your daughter, ſir, may de-
" pend on an equal ſhare of my fond
" attention, with her to whom nature
" has made me the happy mother; and
" when an increaſe of income and addi-
" tional duties call my children to a dif-
" ferent place of reſidence, I ſhall ſtill
" have the ſatisfaction of being near
" enough to be frequently a perſonal
" ſharer in their happineſs. Mr. Spencer,
" ſir, has given you and Mrs. Griffin
" ſuch characters, as confirm my appro-
" bation of my ſon's choice, and I doubt
" not, the utmoſt harmony will always
" ſubſiſt between us. You and that lady
" muſt make my houſe your country
" retirement, as I ſhall always conſider
" your family as part of my own.

" I think your opinion will concur
" with mine, that it will be moſt prudent
" in my ſon to defer marriage till after
" he has taken orders. This will only
" occaſion a delay of a few months, du-

"ring which time (as he will ſoon leave
"Oxford) he can frequently enjoy the
"converſation of your amiable daughter.
"Many people are malicious, and an
"haſty marriage might confirm unfavour-
"able ſuſpicions; but in this and every
"other reſpect, where the happineſs of
"my children is the principal conſidera-
"tion, I only *adviſe*."

What an adorable woman! exclaimed Mr. Leiceſter. I have no other objection to this marriage than that it will exclude me from a nearer alliance to Mrs. Villars. But to be ſerious, I ſhall glory in being related to her, and in marrying my child to a perſon, who I hope inherits her virtues. My Iſabella will be happy in a mother, and I flatter myſelf, in an huſband. You need not doubt it, added I; Mr. Villars is all that ſuch a parent can deſire.—But I will not pain your modeſty by repeating, what friendſhip and juſtice prompted me to ſay.

Miſs

Miſs Leiceſter, when her father aſked, if ſhe could reſign her whole heart to you, bluſhing confeſs'd, it had long been your's. —I am conſcious, ſir, ſaid ſhe, that I have tranſgreſſed my duty to you, and been guilty of a breach of prudence. Only pardon what has paſt, and you ſhall have no future cauſe to blame me. A fond embrace ſealed the forgiveneſs. Mrs. Griffin, though ſilent during the melting reconciliation, expreſſed her ſatisfaction by the tendereſt embraces, and by ſympathetic looks.

A more chearful ſcene enſued; Mr. Leiceſter thanked me cordially, aſked if I was to inform you of what had paſſed, and rallied his daughter on the proſpect of ſeeing her lover very ſoon.—I am delighted in having been an inſtrument of your and this family's happineſs. Miſs Leiceſter is a moſt amiable young lady; I aſked Mr. Leiceſter, why he had immured her ſo cloſely, that I never ſaw her

till by accident in Magdalen walks. He ingenuouſly told me, that ſince his wife's death, he had ſeldom permitted his Iſabella to viſit or receive company. My acquaintance with him commenced ſince that time.

When I aroſe to leave them, Mr. Leiceſter repeated his thanks. His daughter bowed: I ſaw the ſtruggle between modeſty and gratitude, and was convinced ſhe would have indulged the impulſes of the latter, if the conſideration of the lover had not rendered her fearful ſhe ſhould infringe the former. Both joined in requeſting my viſits.

I took up my pen immediately on my return, and truly ſhare the joy I ſhall excite. If I can be farther ſerviceable to you, depend on every good office in the power of, dear ſir,

Your faithful and affectionate,

H. SPENCER.

I am ſo happy, madam, that I can't find expreſſions adequate to my meaning. What acknowledgments, what gratitude can equal my obligations to you? I acquieſce in your motives, I joyfully embrace your propoſal, and it ſhall be the ſtudy of my life to prove my juſt ſenſe of your goodneſs. Mr. Spencer's friendly mediation claims for him a large ſhare of my gratitude and eſteem.

I ſhall aſk leave to be abſent a few days, and ſet out to-morrow morning for London. Oh! madam, when I think of ſeeing my charmer, and of making her mine for ever, with the approbation of all our friends, my heart exults, and I can ſcarcely reſtrain my joy within the bounds of moderation!

I hope my ſiſter is acquainted with the ſtate of my affairs. Be ſo good as to aſſure her, that no change of circumſtances can effect any alteration in my affection for her; and I beg *you* will believe that I

ſhall

ſhall always cheriſh thoſe ſentiments of reverence, gratitude and love, with which I now ſubſcribe myſelf,

Dear and ever honoured madam,
your dutiful ſon,
and faithful humble ſervant,
FREDERICK VILLARS.

LETTER LIV.

Mr. VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

HONOURED MADAM,

I HAVE ſeen the amiable creature, and my love is heightened by this laſt interview. Mr. Leiceſter and Mrs. Griffin, to ſum up their characters, are worthy of being allied to you, and of being father and aunt to my lovely Iſabella. I can't give you the particulars of my conference with theſe relations-elect; I received pardon and approbation, and they conducted me to the dining room, where my charmer was ſitting, ignorant of my arrival.

val. They left me at the door, which I gently opened. Miſs Leiceſter was reading, and did not raiſe her eyes on my entrance; but my impatience diſcovered me. I flew to her, caſt myſelf at her feet, and, ſnatching her hand, kiſſed it eagerly.

Oh! good God, cry'd ſhe, is it poſſible! Mr. Villars!—I ſaw the ſurprize affected her too much, and drawing a chair near her's, gazed on her in ſilence, till ſhe was more compoſed. Never did I ſee her look ſo beautiful! Her fine eyes ſhed a milder, tenderer radiance; an air of delicate ſenſibility took poſſeſſion of each ſweet feature.

Pardon me, deareſt Miſs Leiceſter, ſaid I, that I dared to encourage an hope that my preſence was neceſſary to your happineſs. It is not vanity, but love, that makes me enjoy this ſweet confuſion. Ah! my Iſabella, what have I ſuffered? But this meeting pays me for every pang. Have *I* felt leſs affliction? (anſwered ſhe)

in-

in the sweetest tone; I cannot think it.—But what a delightful change! resumed I.—Duty authorizes our love, and I have permission to hope the time is not far distant, when I shall have you mine, both by divine and human laws. Will you not ratify the extatic hope?

I have never learnt, said she, blushing, to disguise the sentiments of my heart. Perhaps there was a time when my looks revealed too much, though my lips were silent; but it is not now inconsistent with prudence to avow my affection. Our interviews at Oxford were embittered by the consciousness of a breach of duty. Believe me, Mr. Villars, though I loved you then, and the thought of losing you raised in me an anxious and tender solicitude, yet I never loved you so well as now, when my choice is confirmed by the sanction of duty. I find that without deserving, it is impossible to be happy.

I applauded

I applauded her ſentiments with ſuch fervor, that her cheeks were overſpread with bluſhes. She has promiſed to be mine at the time you mentioned. Surely, ſaid ſhe, Mrs. Villars is the moſt excellent of women! How delightful will it be to obſerve, and imitate her virtues.—And will it not be delightful, replied I, to ſhare, and contribute to the happineſs of a man, who loves you with the moſt ſincere and ardent affection?

"Thro' youth and age, in love excelling,
"We'll hand in hand together tread."

Her looks ſweetly indicated the tenderneſs of her love. We paſſed two hours in bliſsful converſation, and I might perhaps have treſpaſſed longer on my friends indulgence, if Miſs Leiceſter had not hinted that we ought to ſeek her father and aunt, who might think themſelves neglected; I acquieſced with reluctance, and we all ſpent the reſt of the evening together.

With

With what pleaſure, madam, ſhall I introduce to you my Iſabella!——Mr. Leiceſter has hired a ſmall, but neat houſe, in Red Lion ſtreet. His ſiſter will continue with him; for having no children, and being lately left a widow, ſhe is deſirous of living with her only brother.

I ſhould have called on lady Egerton, but Mrs. Griffin tells me, ſhe went down into Northamptonſhire before her own arrival in town; and that Mrs. Stamford will detain her mother till ſhe has an addition to her family and recovers her health.

I ſhall leave town again on Tueſday, as I intend to make frequent excurſions. I am, ever honoured madam,

Your dutiful and gratefully happy ſon,

FREDERICK VILLARS.

LETTER LV.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. VILLARS.

I CONGRATULATE my dear ſon on his preſent happineſs, and I enjoy with him his proſpect of heightened felicity. Do not ſuſpect, my child, that the caution I ſhall give you ariſes from a ſuſpicion of your honour, or a doubt of the proper baſis of your love. It is excited by the danger of your ſituation, and dictated by the anxious tenderneſs of a fond mother.

The betrothed lover is apt to imagine he has a right to expect from his charmer all the favours which are conſiſtent with modeſty; but remember, my child, it is ſafer to forbear the indulgence of what appears to be innocent, than to hazard the riſe of a criminal deſire. A man of real goodneſs will confeſs that a woman cannot too carefully preſerve the ſtricteſt delicacy of behaviour to an accepted admirer. The lover views with paſſion; others may behold

With what pleaſure, madam, ſhall I introduce to you my Iſabella!——Mr. Leiceſter has hired a ſmall, but neat houſe, in Red Lion ſtreet. His ſiſter will continue with him; for having no children, and being lately left a widow, ſhe is deſirous of living with her only brother.

I ſhould have called on lady Egerton, but Mrs. Griffin tells me, ſhe went down into Northamptonſhire before her own arrival in town; and that Mrs. Stamford will detain her mother till ſhe has an addition to her family and recovers her health.

I ſhall leave town again on Tueſday, as I intend to make frequent excurſions. I am, ever honoured madam,

Your dutiful and gratefully happy ſon,

FREDERICK VILLARS.

LETTER LV.

Mrs. VILLARS to Mr. VILLARS.

I CONGRATULATE my dear ſon on his preſent happineſs, and I enjoy with him his proſpect of heightened felicity. Do not ſuſpect, my child, that the caution I ſhall give you ariſes from a ſuſpicion of your honour, or a doubt of the proper baſis of your love. It is excited by the danger of your ſituation, and dictated by the anxious tenderneſs of a fond mother.

The betrothed lover is apt to imagine he has a right to expect from his charmer all the favours which are conſiſtent with modeſty; but remember, my child, it is ſafer to forbear the indulgence of what appears to be innocent, than to hazard the riſe of a criminal deſire. A man of real goodneſs will confeſs that a woman cannot too carefully preſerve the ſtricteſt delicacy of behaviour to an accepted admirer. The lover views with paſſion; others may behold

the ſame beauty with indifference. How many women *innocently*, or to give it a more expreſſive term, *inconſiderately* permit freedoms which occaſion an inſenſible deviation into the paths of vice. We ſhould always conſider that thoſe actions which, though innocent in themſelves, prevent any duty, or tend to promote any vice, muſt be blameable, and ought to be avoided.

I hope this amiable family will give me the ſatisfaction of ſeeing them in the country ſome time this ſummer. I am particularly impatient to ſee Miſs Leiceſter. She has my love and eſteem. Your ſiſter offers her a ſincere friendſhip and ſiſterly affection.

You will not be able, my ſon, to live in affluence; but I know you are convinced that great fortunes, no more than great abilities, are beneficial, except when they are properly uſed; that we have reaſon to be ſatisfied with the portion of each the Almighty diſpenſer beſtows, and that we ſhall be accountable for the abuſe of both.

Happi-

Happineſs is to be attained in all ranks of life, for it certainly does not ariſe from the increaſe of our poſſeſſions, but from the contraction of our deſires; and from a firm reliance on the wiſdom and goodneſs of Providence, that he cannot but grant us what will conſtitute our greateſt happineſs upon the whole of our being.

I have only to ſubjoin that I hope, love will be ſo far from diminiſhing your attention to the duties of life, that it will animate your performance of them. I would have you be ambitious of meriting all the honours the univerſity can confer, or that your ſituation enables you to receive.

I am, my dear ſon,

Your truly affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

On *Happineſs*. Incloſed in the foregoing.

Not urg'd by flatt'ry's inſidious art,
I ſeek to trace the windings of the heart,

Maternal love inspires an ardours flame,
Far more impulsive than desire of fame.
Amidst each various state assign'd below,
Ask you from which our choicest blessings flow?
Whether Ambition's sons with soaring eye
The tempting form of Happiness descry?
Or whether in the robes of Pomp array'd,
They barter bliss for an illusive shade?
If Fortune's gems can purchase real joy?
Or whether wealth the sweets of peace destroy?
Weak minds are dazzled with the blaze of state,
And think all bliss compriz'd in being great.
O! power of greatness! honourable sound!
Can Virtue's wreath the brow of Vice surround?
Can Titles any real joy impart,
Expel the head-ach, ease the anxious heart?
Can pomp or riches, make us wise and good?
And is our worth ennobled with our blood?
Yet poverty is more contemn'd than vice,
And virtue only honour'd in its rise.
So in a field with flowers enamell'd round,
Tho' each embellishes the mossy ground,
Lost in that humble spot they bloom in vain,
Or only please at best some simple swain;
But if transplanted to a milder sky,
Where gaudy ranges charm the roving eye,

They

They then become the garden's choiceſt pride,
Admir'd they climb, and deck the verdant ſide,
Sometimes, but ah! how ſeldom is it known,
Bliſs ſhares with royalty the glittering crown.
When virtue ſettles each ſupreme decree,
The throne's ſupport is public liberty!
He who with rapture hugs the golden prey,
Thinks it eludes his graſp, and flits away,
Amidſt the means of life neglects the end,
By none befriended, and to none a friend!
From the mind's treaſure flows our real wealth,
Diffuſive virtue is our mental health.
See! on the rural cot ſweet peace attend,
And gentle dove-ey'd Innocence deſcend!
Where the unpoliſhed mind devoid of art,
Breathes forth the genuine language of the heart.
The huſbandman who earns his daily bread,
And by the labour of his hands is fed,
Enjoys more pleaſure in his ruſtic meal
Than pamper'd luxury has pow'r to feel;
Sweet are his ſlumbers, undiſturb'd his reſt,
No fears of future want invade his breaſt:
But when enfeebled, or by age or pain,
Health, dimpled Goddeſs, quits the ruddy ſwain,
Peace ſpreads her downy wing, deſerts her ſeat,
And meagre Care uſurps the calm retreat.

Thus variegated life in every ſtate,
On Hope's expanded pinion ſoars elate,
Then ſinks beneath th' oppreſſive ſtroke of fate.

In ſmooth Proſperity's deluſive wave,
How oft enfeebled Virtue finds a grave!
But when Adverſity extends her rod,
Vice trembling owns the influence of a God.
Affliction's cloud then weeps itſelf away,
The Sun of Righteouſneſs imparts its ray,
And beams the dawn of Heav'n's eternal day.

Still aſk you, is there no peculiar ſtate
Diſtinguiſh'd with the conſtant ſmiles of fate?
All earthly joy from *Reſignation* ſprings,
She chears the ſwain and ſooths the breaſts of kings,
Refines the droſs of all impure deſires,
And on Devotion's wing to Heav'n aſpires!
There point thy way for bliſs without alloy,
And in that hope the preſent good enjoy!

LETTER LVI.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

ONCE more, my dear daughter, I am arrived at this ſeat of happineſs. What a traveller have I lately been! I had a pleaſant journey to town, where I ſtaid only one night. On my arrival here, I found my amiable friend happy in an addition of family. Mr. Villars reſides now in the country, and Mr. Leiceſter, his daughter, and my old friend Mrs. Griffin, are come to ſtay a fortnight. The latter has intirely quitted Northamptonſhire. I had never ſeen Miſs Leiceſter. Her perſon is tall, graceful, and genteel. Her complexion remarkably fine, is beautifully contraſted by her black hair. Her eyes are a dark brown, and expreſſive of the ſentiments of her heart. Her features are leſs delicate than Miſs Villars's, but equally regular. She has a hand and arm that vies in beauty with Mrs. Villars's: Her diſpoſition

is as amiable as her perſon is lovely. Miſs Villars and ſhe are united in a ſtrict friendſhip, which the ſimilarity of their tempers muſt daily encreaſe.

Mr. Villars's behaviour to Miſs Leiceſter is rational and tender; her's delicate and unaffected. His appearance and converſation are improved by this attachment, tho' he was before ſo agreeable, I did not believe he could appear more to advantage.

Mr. Leiceſter is a comely old gentleman. He ſeems to have a good natural underſtanding, but a confined knowledge of the world, and literary ſubjects; having applied, I ſuppoſe, chiefly to his profeſſion. He has bad health, being confined frequently by the gout, but his ſpirits are good. Miſs Leiceſter is the darling of her father and aunt.

Mrs. Villars, Mrs. Griffin, and my dear charge, received me with ſincere joy; and the former introduced me to her new friends.

friends. What a happy circle! We want only you, Mr. Stamford, and your little Matilda; but you are now quite *domesticated*, and too much the mother to become a rambler.

Every one here admires my friend as much as I do; but who that knows her excellencies can refuse the eſteem due to ſuch ſuperior merit?

* * * * *

We ſee by the papers this morning, that Sir Francis Raymond is dead. He expired in a fit of the apoplexy laſt Monday. His ſon, now Sir John, has it in his power to ſhew his regard for Miſs Villars. This marriage would compleat my friend's happineſs. I hinted to her my hopes. She begged I would not rally her daughter on this occaſion, leſt I ſhould excite a wiſh which might render her miſerable by its diſappointment.

For my own part, ſaid ſhe, I neither indulge hope nor fear. If Sir John really loves and makes profeſſions to my Flavia, as his character affords a rational expectation of his making her happy, I ſhould then feel the joy with which every parent muſt be inſpired on ſuch a proſpect for her child.

Mr. Villars was acquainted with Sir John Raymond at college, and gives him a good character, which is confirmed by Mrs. Griffin, who has a couſin intimate with him. His father's penurious diſpoſition made him ſoon recall his ſon from Oxford, where even the *neceſſary* expences appeared exorbitant, for I never heard that Sir John was addicted to any vice; indeed you know I enquired into his conduct on obſerving his attachment to Miſs Villars, and every perſon who mentioned him, concurred to ſtrengthen my deſire that he ſhould be allied to this family.

My

My love and bleſſing attend you and Mr. Stamford. Give the dear infant an hundred kiſſes for me. I am,

My dear child,

your affectionate mother,

E. EGERTON.

LETTER LVII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

MY DEAR DAUGHTER,

SIR John Raymond arrived here on Wedneſday morning. He ſat out from town the day after his father's funeral. He aſked for Mrs. Villars, and it ſeems explained himſelf to her in a very unreſerved manner. My friend, who always proves that true politeneſs is conſiſtent with ſencerity, and who is ever attentive to her children's happineſs, thanked him for his good opinion of her daughter; and added, that as ſhe was an entire ſtranger, except to his perſonal accompliſhments, it was from

the

the character her ſon and ſome other friends had given him, that ſhe would refer him to her daughter. She expreſſed herſelf convinced of the ſincerity of his love by the generoſity of his offers. She hoped, ſhe told him, that he was the worthy object ſhe wiſhed ſhould call her Flavia his, from his honourable and dutiful procedure in the concealment of his love, when it could not have received the approbation of his father. She farther told him, that her daughter's heart was entirely at her own diſpoſal, and that ſhe thought a parent had no right to give any encouragement to a lover of her child, till convinced he was agreeable to that child.

Sir John deſired the young lady might ſuffer no conſtraint, and begged only for an interview to diſcloſe his paſſion, which Mrs. Villars promiſed him after dinner.

On leaving him, Mrs. Villars took the young lady aſide, and gave her theſe particulars. The latter came immediately to me, informed

informed me of the propoſal, and of her mother's goodneſs. I ſaw ſhe had not the inclination for Sir John which had attached her to Captain Welmore; but that the ſmall ſpark of vanity in her compoſition was animated by this proof of her charms.

Mrs. Villars came into the chamber, and after repeating what had paſt, intreated the ſweet girl would conſult her heart, whether it was inclined to favour Sir John. Be not biaſſed, my dear child, continued this excellent parent, by his rank and fortunes; but conſider whether this *man*, without theſe adventitious appendages, would be your choice. If you can feel that preference for him, to which as your huſband he will be entitled, his diſtinguiſhed birth and large eſtate may be allowed to be valuable prerogatives, as they increaſe the influence of example, and enable the good to relieve the affecting diſtreſſes of poverty.

I con-

I confess to you, madam, answered Miss Villars, that Sir John Raymond has not inspired me with such an affection as I felt for Captain Welmore; but I believe that was really a *romantic* extravagant passion. I esteem Sir John, I even think his person extremely agreeable; nay more, I believe that, independent of his fortune and station in life, I can be happier with him than with any other man I know. If to your unerring judgement, these dispositions appear a proper foundation for happiness, I will give my hand to Sir John.

Mrs. Villars embraced her. It is *your* happiness, my dear, said she, that is the subject of my consideration. Take time to determine, and do not engage your person till you are certain you can bestow your heart.—She then asked, if it was agreeable to us to go down. Miss Villars and I accompanied her. Sir John's behaviour shewed the violence of his love. His assiduities, I believe, really touch'd the tender

Flavia's

Flavia's heart, for there was a ſort of complacency in her manner after his declaration of his paſſion, which I did not obſerve before. He took leave in the evening, after inviting himſelf the next morning to breakfaſt. Accordingly he paſs the following day with us.

This day he was obliged to return to town, but I'll anſwer for it his will not be a long abſence. Miſs Villars actually looks rather melancholy. Sweet girl! Thy ſuſceptible heart is formed to enjoy the higheſt conjugal happineſs, or to endure the ſevereſt pangs of matrimonial infelicity! I hope Sir John is of a mild and tender diſpoſition, and entirely free from the vices of the town. Tho' I ſhall have this dear creature for a neighbour, yet methinks there is ſomething ſo dove-like, ſo extremely gentle in Miſs Villars, I can't help being fearful, that the loſs of her mother's unremitted tenderneſs will never be compenſated by an huſband.

As

As I know you intereſt yourſelf in the happineſs of this moſt deſerving family, I ſhall write when any thing occurs. Mr. Leiceſter and the two amiable ladies leave us on Monday; Mr. Villars will attend them to town, and make further enquiries after ſir John.

I am, my dear child,

Your moſt affectionate mother,

E. EGERTON.

P. S. Mrs. and Miſs Villars's reſpects, and my love and bleſſing, are always *meant*, though they be not particularly mentioned.

LETTER LVIII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

MY DEAR DAUGHTER,

I AM afraid my ſilence has alarmed you. A violent inflammation in my eyes has prevented me from writing; and though Mrs. Villars was ſo kind as to offer to be

my amanuenſis, yet I was apprehenſive you would conclude it was ſome worſe complaint if you did not ſee my own ſcrawl; I therefore delayed accepting her propoſal from day to day, till a fortnight has elapſed. I am now able to ſcribble a little, and will let you into the ſtate of affairs here.

Mr. Villars's good opinion of his intended brother-in-law, was heightened by the information he received in London. Sir John is generally here. Mrs. Villars propoſed deferring his nuptials till the mourning for his father is out, but he ſays, he can't conſent to a longer delay than the marriage of Mr. Villars with Miſs Leiceſter, which will be in leſs than two months. Mrs. Villars intreats I will be preſent at this double marriage. I want to go to town, and ſhall therefore ſet out next week, and return before the important day.

Lady

Lady Maynwaring ſent a letter by ſir John to Miſs Villars. She is the ſame lively creature as when ſhe left town, but I hope, more attentive to her true intereſt.

I would have perſuaded Mrs. and Miſs Villars to go back with me and buy cloaths, but the ceremony of dreſs is to be adjuſted after the ſolemnization of marriage; my friends convinced me ſuch a journey would be inconqenient, and I deſiſted from further importunity. My next will be from town. Excuſe this ſhort letter.

I am, my dear,

Your's affectionately,

E. EGERTON.

LETTER LIX.

Lady MAYNWARING to Miſs VILLARS.

PRithee, tell me honeſtly, dear Villars, what you have thought of me? Did you believe I ſhould write, or did you form no expectation from my promiſe?

To be ſure I might have found time, and yet I have been moſt monſtrouſly fatigued with company, ſhews, &c. But this is foreign from my purpoſe. I meant to congratulate you on your conqueſt. I ſwear, child, ſir John is a very pretty fellow; a man of ſpirit; but don't be alarmed, he has a very good character: I am glad we ſhall have you in town, though you are rather a dull little toad. You'll chuſe ſome graver companion than I intend to be. My ſpouſe likes my humour; really we are happy, very happy. He is a ſweet tempered, conſiderate ſoul. I loſt a whole pocket full of money the other night, and what does he, but in the genteeleſt manner preſent me with a bank note of 100*l.* to defray my expences. It has had a good effect. I won't be outdone in generoſity; I have abſolutely determined, never to play ſo high again.

Oh! I have a piece of news for my Villars. When I was at Cheſter, I had

the pleaſure of humbling a country mad-dam, who being raiſed from the dunghill, and taken to be the conſort of a reſpectable ſquire, took it into her head to deſpiſe all her former acquaintance, and to be intimate with people of faſhion: a moſt ridiculous creature! I was upon a viſit where the *muſhroom* happened to be engaged, and ſhe entered ſoon after me, moſt violently be-dizen'd. I was in a ſlight mourning for an hundredth couſin, and not being perfectly well at the time, was quite in an undreſs. Who could imagine therefore, that under ſo mean an appearance, ſo eminent a perſonage as *my lady* was concealed? Madam glided up the room with an air of ſelf-importance; but ſeeing her place occupied, ſhe ſtood aghaſt like Macbeth on viewing the ghoſt of Banquo. She viewed me ſcornfully, and, on the information of my paultry apparel, preſented me with a pair of fine broad ſhoulders, amply

amply overſpread with an enormous point lace handkerchief.

I took the tea firſt without ſcruple. The lady did not chuſe any. An air of gloomy reſentment ſat upon her brow; and as the perſon I viſited knew the cauſe of her ſilence and diſcontent, ſhe kept up the deception by waving my title when ſhe addreſſed me.

Sir Richard's entrance concluded the farce. He gave me the appellation to which the plebeian always paid homage. She turned towards me, and diſplayed a couple of cheeks that outvied the *ſunny* ſide of the catherine pear. Never was pride ſo compleatly humbled. The alteration in her behaviour was not to her advantage, for ſhe was ſo meanly attentive to pleaſe me that I was heartily ſick of her fondneſs. I could not help reading her a lecture, which, though indirectly addreſſed, ſhe could not miſapply. I believe ſhe will be very cautious how ſhe judges again

from appearances, and I hope she is convinced that affability should always accompany superiority of station; but I dare not indulge any very sanguine expectations.

Let me know precisely when you enter the holy state of matrimony. You have my best wishes, child. I am giddy, but I have a friendly heart. You must not delay sir John's happiness, for he says, he can't support life if you do; not that I altogether believe him, for he does not live wholly upon the thin diet of love. He made considerable devastation yesterday at my table. I told him he had not a lover-like appearance, and that he should live like the enamoratoes of old, who fed only upon sighs and tears; but he relishes my provision better than my advice.

I have seen your brother's flame. Sir John shewed her to me last night at the play. She is a charming girl. I must be acquainted with her, though I suppose she is more your counterpart than mine.

—Well!

—Well! what a letter have I written! There is enough of it to cover the floor in my dining room. 'Tis time to releaſe you, and to ſubſcribe myſelf, your truly affectionate friend,

ANNE MAYNWARING.

P. S. Sir Richard ſends his compliments with mine to you, to the reſpected though unknown Mrs. Villars, and to lady Egerton.

LETTER LX.

Mrs VILLARS to lady MAYNWARING.

I Really wondered, dear madam, when I received your ladyſhip's letter, what new correſpondent it came from; for to own the truth, I long ſince gave up the hopes of your performing your promiſe. It was not however leſs pleaſing, and I take the earlieſt opportunity of thanking you for your kind, though late remembrance. If I tell you I thought your

ſilence was occaſioned by *want of thought*, I don't believe I ſhall incur your diſpleaſure, or be very remote from the truth. I know it did not proceed from want of affection.

I wiſh your lecture to the haughty lady may produce the deſired effect. We laughed at the diſcompoſure you excited in her, and thought her puniſhment very juſt.

My acknowledgments are due to you, dear madam, for your kind wiſhes. Sir John is really very agreeable to me, and my mother authorizes me to tell you, that in about two months our hands will be joined. I am ſure, if your ladyſhip was now to ſee me, you would think me *very* dull and ſtupid; for though I have no doubt of ſir John's ſincere attachment, though I really love him, yet I feel ſuch apprehenſions on the thought of leaving that dear parent, whoſe advice and tenderneſs have preſerved in me a conſtant ſerenity of mind,

mind, that my heart is oppreſſed with a heavineſs it cannot ſhake off. But I beg pardon for troubling you with the mention of thoſe uneaſy emotions which it is my duty to conquer.

I participate in your ladyſhip's happineſs, and hope it will continue uninterrupted. You taſte the heart-felt ſatisfaction of pleaſing, by your every action, the perſon moſt dear to you.

I am glad you like Miſs Leiceſter. I aſſure you her beauty is her leaſt perfection, though ſhe has as great a ſhare of it as any woman I know. She is rather grave than gay; but even you, madam, with all your entertaining livelineſs, muſt love this excellent young lady. She will add the title of Siſter to that of Friend, at the ſame time I ſhall give my hand to ſir John.

I hope your ladyſhip will imitate my example in returning an early anſwer, unleſs ſo inſipid a correſpondent diſguſts you.

My mother and I preſent our beſt reſpects to you and ſir Richard. Lady Egerton will be ſo kind as to convey this letter.

I am, dear madam,

your ladyſhip's

affectionate humble ſervant,

FLAVIA VILLARS.

LETTER LXI.

Lady MAYNWARING to Miſs VILLARS.

I AM glad, my dear, I am to have you for a neighbour inſtead of a correſpondent, for writing does not agree either with my conſtitution or inclination. I really thought I had got the rheumatiſm the day after I wrote my long letter; ſuch a pain had I from my ſhoulder to my fingers ends. I was frightened at ſuch a ſymptom of infirmity at my time of life, till happening to caſt my eye upon my

pen

pen and ink, I gave up my alarms, and determined never to write ſo much again. A pen is a proper implement in the hand of ſuch a grave matronly perſon as you are; but to one of my lively turn, the wings of Mercury would be more pleaſing than all the inſpirations of Apollo.

Your reproof, my dear, was more gentle than I deſerved, and you find I have been ſo ungenerous as to treſpaſs again in conſequence of your forgiving temper. It is almoſt ſix weeks ſince I received yours, but let me tell you, though you was expeditious in anſwering mine, yet I had much leſs in quantity than I ſent; and again, that as I have been dilatory in my reply, I will write you another letter very ſoon, and require only a perſonal anſwer, as I know your time is very much employed. Your acknowledgments will be ready to overflow, but reſtrain them; for, to moderate your gratitude, I will inform you that I ſhall now take the liberty of chiding

you,

you, and my next will contain ſomething I want to communicate. To ſhew you I prefer your good to the pleaſure of divulging a ſecret, I begin with upbraiding you for being melancholy on a proſpect which would enliven the heart of any other woman. Would you always live with your mother, child? Prithee be more of a woman. You are not like Shakeſpear's love-ſick damſel, who "ſmiled at grief," (by the bye an odd kind of a deſcription, for who did ever hear of ſmiling miſery?) for you *grieve at joy*. Your mother, I am certain, though ſhe will be unwilling to part from you, ſacrifices her own pleaſure to your intereſt, or rather this marriage will complete her wiſhes.—With whom could you have a better chance for happineſs? I'll lay my life, you would not chuſe, with all your *vapouriſms*, to be of the *ancient* not *honourable order* of antiquated maidens. You are neither prude nor coquette, though I have ſometimes *called*

you

you pru*diſh*. You love ſir John, he idolizes you, and you have nothing to object but leaving your mother, from whom you can hear every day. You will be often with her, or ſhe and your brother and ſiſter in town with you. Lady Egerton, who is your ſincere friend, will alſo be your neighbour. When you want to be laughed out of any grave freak, come to me. I think I have ſaid enough to baniſh melancholy. Let me only add, that you will be ungrateful to Providence if you don't rejoice in the good it appoints you. With this grave reflection I conclude my letter, my *ſecond* long letter, in defiance of rheumatic pains. Our compliments attend you and Mrs. Villars.

I am, my dear,

Your ſincerely affectionate

A. MAYNWARING.

LETTER LXII.

Lady MAYNWARING to Miss VILLARS.

WELL, my Villars, now for the ſecret.—I have behaved fooliſhly.—"I expected a piece of *news*, lady Maynwaring." The *manner*, child, of my folly will be novelty to *you*, though here it is a *common diſorder*. Thus it was. Sir Richard and I went to an aſſembly. I had not been quite well, and was deſired not to dance. My ſpirits revived at the ſight of the company, the ſound of the muſic, &c. and I was ſhaking my foot to a briſk tune, when a brilliant young nobleman beg'd to have the honour of being my partner. I forgot my promiſe and my indiſpoſition, and was ſo much elated by my lord's ſprightlineſs, and the chearfulneſs of the company, that I prattled away uncommonly. Sir Richard came to intreat I would dance no more; but I de-

ſired

ſired he would be good, and not interrupt me. My fop immediately interprets this requeſt in his favour, and aſſumed ſuch an air of conſequence upon it, that though I, who meant no harm, was unwilling to think any was intended; yet I could not avoid diſcovering the miſconſtruction he put upon my gaiety.

He grew ſo exceedingly impertinent, that at laſt I gave him a moſt ſevere frown, and told him my fondneſs for dancing had induced me to break my promiſe, but that I did not know what excuſe he could make for forgetting the reſpect due to the wife of ſir Richard Maynwaring. I then ſat down; my lord looked like a fool, and I felt conſcious of imprudence. I owned to my tender ſpouſe that I had behaved indiſcreetly, and the ſweet tempered man forgave me. As giddy as you think me, and as I really am in general, yet I have often thought with concern of this affair. Depend upon it, my dear, I

will

will behave better for the future. My lord had been enough acquainted with ſir Richard and me, to know we are happy in each other; but when will vanity and *folly* ceaſe their empire over the ſexes?

Next week, I ſuppoſe, will give you a title and an huſband. The firſt is a mere empty ſound, the laſt ſometimes proves a real bleſſing, and I hope yours will be ſo. I ſhall write no congratulatory epiſtle. You now have the beſt wiſhes of ſir Richard, and thoſe of

Your truly affectionate friend,

A. MAYNWARING.

LETTER LXIII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

I THINK it impoſſible there can be a happier ſet of people than are now aſſembled at G****. Miſs Leiceſter and Miſs Villars are the leaſt chearful; indeed the

the ſweet Flavia's countenance has even worn an air of melancholy which is now diſpelled. To-morrow is the day appointed for the marriages.

Yeſterday Mrs. Villars found her daughter with me. My dear Flavia, ſaid ſhe, you have not the appearance of a bride-elect. Miſs Leiceſter is leſs chearful than uſual, but you look unhappy. Tell me, my love, if you wiſh to retract your engagement? Is Sir John leſs worthy, or are you leſs ſenſible of his merit, than when you gave him your heart? Confeſs it to me, if you have reaſon for your change? If you have none, tho' you ſhew a levity of which I thought you incapable, yet to profeſs in the ſight of God, and in the preſence of men, a love you no longer feel, would be highly criminal. It would be leſs faulty to recede from your promiſe, than to confirm it without the power of fulfilling it.

Ah!

Ah! my dear mother, cried Miſs Villars, eagerly ſnatching her hand, do not believe your child capable of ſuch inſtability. I love Sir John with a more rational affection than I felt for Captain Welmore, and my uneaſineſs ariſes from my fears of being ever leſs dear to him; from the thoughts of exchanging the ſweets of ſolitude for the tumult of a town life, and from apprehenſions that I ſhall not properly diſcharge the duties of my elevated ſtation: but there *is* a cauſe of uneaſineſs, continued ſhe, burſting into tears, which affects me moſt ſenſibly. I muſt be parted from you! She threw her arms round Mrs. Villars's neck, and ſobb'd aloud. My friend was greatly affected. My dear, my amiable child! ſaid ſhe, you will not *loſe* me. I ſhall accompany you to town, and probably be a frequent viſitor. Sir John and you will I hope paſs ſome weeks with me every ſummer, and I will write as often as you deſire. I ſuffer with you

in the thoughts of parting, yet ſuch an eſtabliſhment, if it make you happy, muſt render me ſo. I know you will adorn the ſtation to which your merit raiſes you. Dry up your tears, my Flavia, my beloved daughter, leſt Sir John ſhould ſuſpect he is become leſs dear to you. Indulge no doubts of the conſtancy of his affection; for you may encourage fears of every poſſible evil, till you are incapable of enjoying any intended good.

This converſation was ſo tender, that it was ſome time before we were ſufficiently recovered to join the reſt of the company; but when we did, I had the pleaſure of obſerving that Miſs Villars was more chearful.

* * * * *

WEDNESDAY.

We are this minute returned from church. The brides behaved very well, and looked admirably. Miſs Leiceſter, tho' ſhe trembled very much, ſpoke diſtinctly and retained greater preſence of

mind than her ſiſter, who changed colour frequently, and ſhed tears which poſſibly prevented her fainting. Her voice was ſcarcely audible. The two gentlemen's tranſports were evident. Their behaviour was decent and devout. The ſatisfaction of the parents and aunt was expreſſed in mute eloquence. I ſhared the joy of all parties. The ladies and gentlemen are gone to walk in the garden with the good reverend who joined their hands. I whiſper'd Mrs. Villars that I would ſcribble a few lines to you, and return in a quarter of an hour. I ſhall have no more time for writing till to-morrow.

* * * * * *

I never paſt a more agreeable day than yeſterday. Mr. Reynolds, the clergyman, was obliged to leave us early, to receive an unexpected viſitor. When he was gone, Mr. Villars, ſeeing the two brides rather thoughtful and ſilent, propoſed to read ſome entertaining book. I aſked Mrs. Villars to

favour us with a compoſition of her own. She modeſtly ſaid, ſhe had juſt finiſhed a little piece of real hiſtory, to which ſhe had added, a viſion the coinage of her own brain; but ſhe had intended them only for the uſe of her children, and fear'd they would fail to contribute to our amuſement. We eagerly intreated to read them, and Mrs. Villars fetch'd her little manuſcript. She gave it into her ſon's hands. I obtained permiſſion to tranſcribe it.—When Mr. Villars had finiſhed the manuſcript, we thanked my excellent friend for the entertainment and inſtruction ſhe had afforded us. She ſhewed very great ſatisfaction in having contributed to ours. The brides had been particularly attentive.—Sir John Raymond propoſed an airing in the coach, as the evening was remarkably pleaſant. Accordingly we were driven a very agreeable tour. After ſupper we had a little concert.

This morning ſome friends called to pay their compliments. We intend ſetting out

for town next Monday, Sir John and Lady Raymond not chuſing to receive here any company in form. They propoſe being down early in the Spring, when this buſineſs of ceremony is to be adjuſted. Mrs. Villars is to be with her daughter in London: Mr. and Mrs. Villars will divide their time between Mr. Leiceſter and Lady Raymond. Mr. Villars is obliged to be in the country again within a month, having promiſed to officiate for a gentleman, whoſe age and infirmities render him incapable of performing the duties of the ſacred function, and whoſe income from a ſmall curacy is his ſole ſupport.

My friends here ſhare in the ſatisfaction I feel, in conſequence of the good account you give me of your own, Mr. Stamford's, and the dear babe's health.

Adieu! my child. When we arrive in London, you ſhall have another letter from

Your truly affectionate mother,

E. EGERTON.

(Inclosed in the foregoing.)

The HISTORY of Mr. and Mrs. FAINWELL.

IN all my obſervations upon the actions of others, I have endeavoured to preſerve Chriſtian charity, and to render my remarks ſubſervient to my own, and my children's improvement. From the following ſtory, a moral truly beneficial may be deduced.

Mr. Fainwell was an attorney, who ſettled in this country ſome years ſince. He married a woman agreeable in perſon, but much his inferior in underſtanding, and whoſe taſte was not at all conformable to his own. His paſſion, however, was violent, and for ſome time after he became the huſband, he continued the fond lover. A few years however changed the ſcene. Mrs. Fainwell was attacked by the ſmall pox, and was greatly altered by the diſtemper. Her health viſibly declined, and

her diſpoſition was rendered fretful by the diſorders ſhe ſuffered. Mr. Fainwell's affection, which had been founded on the mere perſonal graces of his wife, could not ſubſiſt after the alteration he obſerved in her; yet for a time he kept up an appearance of tenderneſs, which perhaps he might have preſerved longer, had not the converſation and beauty of a young lady, who paid Mrs. Fainwell a viſit of ſome weeks, attracted all his attention.

Miſs Playfield (that was her name) was not only remarkably genteel, but had the utmoſt regularity of features. She was converſant with the beſt poetical writers; had a retentive memory, and an eaſy flow of expreſſion. Her diſpoſition was lively, and ſomewhat coquetiſh, but perfectly free from any deſign of giving pain, except to her admirers. This lady's converſation was extremely pleaſing to Mr. Fainwell. He read to her his favourite authors, and was tranſported with her remarks.

Mrs.

Mrs. Fainwell had no reliſh for books. The practice of œconomical duties, and the employment of the needle, engroſſed her time when her health permitted. Her face, which though never beautiful had been extremely agreeable, now wore the pallid hue of ſickneſs. She was well made, but Miſs Playfield was ſo uncommonly genteel, that Mrs. Fainwell appeared aukward in compariſon. She was paſt the bloom of youth. Miſs Playfield ſparkled with all the lively graces of ſixteen. Mr. Fainwell, though ſeveral years older than his wife, retained all his youthful admiration of beauty. He was charmed with Miſs Playfield's perſon, he was delighted to find her taſte for reading correſponded with his own. Mrs. Fainwell's frequent indiſpoſitions gave him opportunities of paſſing many agreeable hours with Miſs Playfield. When tired of books, ſhe could always entertain him with ſome lively anecdote or witty obſervation. Sometimes

indulging the natural vivacity of her temper, ſhe amuſed herſelf in playing childiſh tricks with him. He romped with her. Both were I believe entirely free from any criminal intention; but how dangerous is it for human frailty to rely on its own powers for conqueſt, eſpecially when attacked by the united forces of beauty and wit. Such a ſecurity betrayed Mr. Fainwell, whoſe heart was ſurrendered without an attempt to fortify its weakneſs.

Mrs. Fainwell, without any natural tincture of jealouſy, found her ſuſpicions excited by the inſinuations of one of her ſervants. She attentively obſerved the conduct of her huſband and Miſs Playfield, and her fears were confirmed. Indignation inflamed her almoſt to madneſs. She upbraided Mr. Fainwell in terms the moſt unlikely to reclaim him, and even threatned to expoſe Miſs Playfield, if ſhe did not immediately leave the houſe. Mr. Fainwell, who notwithſtanding his love for

that

that young lady, had always behaved with civility to his wife, felt leſs ſhame on the conſciouſneſs that her ſuſpicions of his eſtranged affection were juſt, than reſentment at the manner of the accuſation. His regard for Miſs Playfield, however, prompted him to defend her innocence with all the energy which truth and love could inſpire. Mrs. Fainwell, enraged at this juſtification of her rival, loudly exclaimed againſt his perfidy. Her maid, who had been the cauſe of this diſturbance, overheard it, and inſtantly informed Miſs Playfield, that her miſtreſs was jealous of her and her maſter, and ſhe had heard her threaten to expoſe them both. Miſs Playfield laugh'd at this intelligence, and for ſome moments enjoyed the admiration ſhe had excited; but when ſhe conſidered that loſs of reputation might be the conſequence, and that ſhe had diſturbed the peace of a family, her fears, and her good nature operated ſo powerfully, that ſhe determined

termined to remove Mrs. Fainwell's ſuſpicions by a different behaviour.

That lady, who really loved her huſband, and had believed herſelf beloved by him, could not ſupport the ſtruggle of contending paſſions; the diſorder of her mind brought on a violent fever, which ſoon put a period to her life. Miſs Playfield left the houſe in the beginning of Mrs. Fainwell's illneſs. She was at firſt greatly affected by her death, but a ſucceſſion of admirers, and a marriage with a noble lord, obliterated all remembrance of it. As for Mr. Fainwell, his concern was very ſhort liv'd, and even his paſſion for Miſs Playfield ſoon extinguiſhed, by the abſence of its object. He had ſome inclination for a ſecond marriage, but the uncertainty of his temper kept him fluttering from beauty to beauty, till old age and infirmities gave him a different train of ideas, and made him relinquiſh the ſociety of the young and gay. This affair, which hap-

pen'd

pen'd ſince I came hither, has often been the ſubject of my reflections.——You find, my dear children, a mere perſonal attachment is not the baſis of connubial happineſs: that as eſteem can only ſubſiſt with mutual virtue, ſo a ſimilarity of diſpoſition in the avocations and amuſements of life, is neceſſary to preſerve that reliſh and complacency, without which wedded love can never be permanent.

You are alſo taught by this ſtory a ſtrict and conſtant examination of your own hearts. We know that nothing but a conformity to the laws of God can entitle us to eternal felicity; but we *inſenſibly* tranſgreſs our duty. "We do not call our ways to "remembrance." Had Mr. Fainwell examined the ſentiments of his heart; had he compared them with the doctrines of chriſtianity, he would have perceived his danger, and guarded againſt the deviation.—It is the judicious remark of a late excellent and dignified divine, that "we ſhould

"*reſiſt*

"*resist* those temptations we cannot *avoid*, "and *avoid* those we cannot *resist*."

When conscious of an abatement in the affection he owed his wife, Mr. Fainwell should have avoided any intercourse which threatened the destruction of his honour, and their future peace. On finding the person of his wife less pleasing to him, had he cultivated in her those qualities of the mind which must have secured his esteem, his affection might have been again conciliated. —— In Mrs. Fainwell's misfortunes, we see the fatal effects of ungoverned passion. If reason could have pleaded in the moment of resentment, she would have perceived the inconsistency of indulging the latter. She had lost the power of pleasing Mr. Fainwell, and if the suggestions of duty and the tender assiduities of love had been ineffectual to secure her husband's affection, could she expect to regain it by severity and reproaches?

The

The inconſiderate Miſs Playfield ſhews us, that gaiety is always blameable when not blended with diſcretion.

From reflections on this ſtory, I am drawn into a conſideration of the different ſources, from whence the infelicities of marriage flow. I have ſeen perſons united by tender love and true eſteem, who yet have been unhappy from little petulancies of temper: others rendered ſo by indulging all the luxuriances of imagination, and attributing them to the goddeſs of their hearts. Theſe conſider marriage as a ſenſual Paradiſe, a Halcyon ſcene, which clouds cannot overcaſt, nor ſtorms ruffle and diſcompoſe. They are unprepared for the viciſſitudes of life, and the changes incident to the human frame. No wonder then that marriage ſoon becomes the tomb of their affection. When love is cemented by mutual eſteem and ſoft complacency, even the indulgences of ſenſe are ſubmitted to the dominion of reaſon,

and

and its enjoyments are heightened by conſidering them as the lawful, yet meaneſt pleaſures of a Chriſtian.—I indulged theſe meditations the other evening till the following viſion preſented itſelf to my imagination.

Methought there was a complaint amongſt ſome of the female ſex, that the alteration in their perſons had eſtranged from them the affection of their huſbands; and I heard an edict publiſhed at the command of Truth, that every individual ſhould appear before her. A general aſſembly of females attended her ſummons. She held in her hand a looking-glaſs, with theſe words imprinted on it, "A Mirror for "true beauty." I was a witneſs to ſuch changes, as both delighted and ſhocked me; but I will mention only three metamorphoſes, which ſhewed in the moſt ſtriking light the virtues of the mirror.

The firſt of theſe was a young creature of fifteen, adorned with every charm that

art

art and nature could beſtow. As ſhe approached the glaſs, her cheek glowed with the hope of heightened beauty, and her eye ſparkled at the thought of excelling every competitor. Conſcious of ſuperior attractions, ſhe caſt around her a look of ineffable diſdain. But what an aſtoniſhing metamorphoſis! on ſeeing herſelf in the mirror, ſhe ſtarted back with horror and amazement. Her features became enlarged and irregular. Her ſhape was diſtorted, and her whole appearance inſpired diſguſt. We ſaw her ſurrounded by flatterers, and encouraging a multiplicity of admirers. In another part of the mirror we beheld her inſulting depreſſed merit, careſſing ſplendid vice, and deſpiſing reputation and virtue.

Behold! ſaid the Goddeſs, the effect of inordinate vanity and immoderate love of pleaſure! Take this glaſs, continued ſhe, preſenting her with a ſmall one of the ſame ineſtimable value, and if thy heart

exult

exult over intrinsic merit, because set in a rough unpolished shell, view thyself in this mirror, and blush with shame for thy folly in despising the true beauty. Every secret thought shall be revealed, and on the features be impressed every latent emotion of the heart.

Another female now drew near the mirror. She seemed to be advanced to the summer of life. Her face without symmetry of feature was inexpressibly pleasing, her person graceful and admirably formed; with an air of diffidence she cast her eyes upon the glass, but an agreeable surprize detained them. Every charm received an additional brilliancy, and every grace was improved into perfection. Thou seest, said the Goddess, that virtue can add new radiance to beauty. This little glass shall assist thy perseverance. When thou beholdest thyself in it, reason justifies thy self-approbation. Thou possessest charms which will flourish in un-

fading bloom, and the perfection of which will entitle thee to the bleſſings of immortality.

The third perſon who advanced moved ſlowly forwards, with her eyes fixed upon the ground. Her features were regular, but her complexion was faded. Melancholy and want of health had reduced her to an emaciated ſtate. Her eyes had loſt their luſtre, but when ſhe raiſed them on the ſpectators, they ſhed mildneſs and benignity. She placed herſelf before the mirror, and I never was ſo much ſurprized as at the alteration. Her complexion became of the moſt tranſcendant whiteneſs, and her cheeks were enlivened with the roſeat bloom of health. Her eyes ſparkled with celeſtial radiance; her whole perſon appeared the temple of a divinity. We ſaw her in the faithful mirror wiping the tear from the orphan's eye, and cauſing "the widow's heart to "ſing for joy." We beheld the livid hue of ſickneſs diſperſed by her aſſiduities,

and the gloom of deſpondency vaniſh at her approach; again we ſaw her ſupplicating at the throne of heaven, for the reformation of an huſband who had deſerted her; in another place inſtructing her children in their duty even to the parent who neglected them.

We gazed on her with reverence and awful love. See! ſaid the Goddeſs of Truth, ſee! mortals, one of my pureſt votaries! Theſe, continued ſhe, pointing to the objects of her amiable daughter's benevolence, theſe thankful hearts offering the effuſions of gratitude, give her a foretaſte of celeſtial harmony. Her's are charms which remain uninjured by time, and ſecure theenjoy ments of eternity! Let the ſenſualiſt, whoſe admiration extends no farther than the vermeil tints on beauty's cheek, view their metamorphoſis in this mirror for *true lovelineſs*. Let him ſee alſo, that fine features receive their greateſt charms from virtue. Or let him behold

behold thee, my exalted daughter, in this glaſs, and he will diſtinguiſh what conſtitutes the real beauty. Who will lament the depredations of time upon the human ſtructure, whilſt the ſoul triumphs in the promiſe that "this corruptible ſhall put "on incorruption?" Behold! ye repining mortals, behold in the ſincere Chriſtian the true beauty!

I awaked from my reverie repeating theſe words: The bleſſed Saviour of the world "had no comelineſs that we ſhould "deſire him;" but, "The Lord ſeeth not "as man ſeeth, for man looketh on the "outward appearance, but the Lord look-"eth on the heart."

LETTER LXIV.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

DEAR DAUGHTER,

WE all left Eſſex in good ſpirits except lady Raymond, whoſe heart was oppreſſed with melancholy. She went through all the rooms, her eyes filled with

tears. When ſhe came to mine, You will blame me, madam, ſaid ſhe, for indulging this ſadneſs with ſuch a proſpect of happineſs before me. But I know not how to leave this beloved ſpot—She was unable to ſay more. Indeed, my dear lady Raymond, you do want a little more reſolution, anſwered I.—I own it, madam, interrupted ſhe; this is a weakneſs I will conquer. I pay a bad compliment to my huſband, continued ſhe, wiping away her tears, in ſhewing ſuch unwillingneſs to accompany him; but my heart is tender, too tender for my peace. How happily has every hour of my life paſſed away in this ſweet place! It is not that ſir John is not infinitely dear to me, but my fears are alarmed on the thoughts of the change in my ſtation, and the difficulty of fulfilling its duties. Would to God I had been fixed in an humbler ſtate, and been the neighbour of my dear mother!

She hurried from me. I was infected with her grief. Even Mrs. Villars's for-

titude was ſhaken. I found her weeping, but ſhe ſoon recovered more compoſure, and imparted it to me.

When we were ſome miles diſtant from G****, lady Raymond appeared tolerably chearful. As for Mr. Villars and his lady, I never obſerved a more promiſing appearance of happineſs. She is now very amiable, and ſhe will improve in true wiſdom, as ſhe determines to make my friend's virtues the model for her imitation.

* * * * * * *

I am juſt returned from ſir John Raymond's. The ladies were preparing for a viſit to ſome ſhops when I went up. Lady Maynwaring was ſoon after admitted, who deſired to be of the party.

You are *ſo* grave, and ſo *very* prudent, ſaid ſhe, to Mrs. Villars and lady Raymond, that I am certain you will not be perfectly in taſte without my inſtructions. I muſt have all this old furniture diſplaced;

every thing *tranſmogrified*. And then *your* dreſs, my dear, there muſt be an entire new regulation—Your ſilks are not rich enough—your laces are now quite unfaſhionable. Your jewels muſt be new ſet. In old lady Raymond's time, they might be modiſh, but now they are not *wearable*. Indeed your whole appearance is rather antique. I could lay out ſome thouſands to advantage for you.

I am almoſt convinced, lady Maynwaring, anſwered Mrs. Villars, that the preſent taſte is the height of extravagance. True taſte is ſurely founded on judgment: propriety is its eſſence. My daughter's dreſs, and the appearance of her houſe, ſhould not diſgrace ſir John's fortune. I would have her ſecure the good opinion of his friends, which will confirm his approbation of his choice. I know ſomething muſt be allowed for the mere ſuperfluities of life, but it is imprudent to hazard the want of its real neceſſaries; a com-

a common and ſad effect of modern luxury! Sir John's inclination muſt direct my child in her choice of ornaments for her perſon and furniture, and I am certain his allowance will amply comprize the extent of her deſires.

Well, but Mrs. Villars, reſumed lady Maynwaring, what would become of all the pretty knick-knacks, which are the ſole employment and ſupport of many in the city, if the people of faſhion were to buy nothing but what they *really want?* Oh! lud, it is what we *pleaſe* to want (as the maſter of the *toy-ſhop* obſerves) that influences us to moſt of our purchaſes.

Don't be apprehenſive, madam, that theſe people will want cuſtomers, ſaid Mrs. Villars ſmiling; there will always be thoſe who will keep them in employ; but if it were otherwiſe, and they were to exchange their trifles for works of real utility, would it not be equally advanta-

geous to the vender, and more eligible for the purchaſer? Surely whilſt ſo many objects of diſtreſs ſupplicate for relief, *they* cannot think themſelves faithful ſtewards of the bounties of providence, who for the ſake of tinſel ornaments, would ſacrifice the extatic pleaſures of benevolence.

Pardon me, lady Maynwaring, continued my excellent friend, for this gravity; but I would have you ſuperior to thoſe cuſtoms which can only plead faſhion in defence of folly, and you profeſs an eſteem for me which I wiſh to deſerve. I will even allow, that what are ſuperfluities to one perſon, are neceſſaries to another; but you muſt alſo confeſs, that the gratification of ſome deſires, only excites additional and unbounded wiſhes.—Well! I vow, cried lady Maynwaring, you have abated my eagerneſs after ſhopping. But come, a little ſpice of curioſity remains. Let's have no more of this at preſent. You are an excellent woman, madam Villars,

Villars, but you muſt have a little mercy upon me. I'm in my novitiate of improvement.

During the converſation, lady Raymond was entirely ſilent; but I ſaw by her looks that her ſentiments concurred with her mother's.—I wiſh ſhe could conquer a penſive ſadneſs, which renders her incapable of enjoying Mrs. Villars's company. She dreads the moment of ſeparation. I have ſeen very little of ſir John ſince we returned to London, for he has a large acquaintance; lady Raymond does not complain of his abſence, though ſhe mentions him with the utmoſt affection. Filial tenderneſs now almoſt entirely engroſſes her heart. How I ſhall pity her when ſhe parts from this beloved, this moſt valuable parent. Mr. and Mrs. Villars are in my dining room: I muſt therefore conclude abruptly. I am, my dear daughter,

Your's moſt affectionately,

E. EGERTON.

LETTER LXV.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

MY DEAR CHILD,

AT the requeſt of Mrs. Villars and lady Raymond, I have mixed in the gay circle of viſitors, which has filled the drawing room of the latter; and, ſince that fatiguing ceremony, have accompanied my friends to ſome of the places of public reſort. To-morrow is the day, which ſeparates the beſt of parents from the moſt affectionate of children. I am invited to paſs this day with them, and even to ſleep at ſir John's this night, that I may ſhare my dear friend to the laſt moment, and exert my endeavours to calm lady Raymond's uneaſineſs. How will her too ſuſceptible heart ſuſtain the ſhock!

* * * * *

We have parted till the morning. What ſtruggles have I obſerved in the diſtreſſed daughter! She feared that ſir John ſhould

reſent

reſent her poignancy of affliction; But what can I do? ſaid ſhe, taking her mother and me aſide; my grief will not be ſuppreſt. Oh! madam, when ſhall we meet again? Be comforted, my child, anſwered the tender parent; you are too much affected by a ſhort ſeparation. It will not be many months before I ſhall ſee you in the country. I leave you in the poſſeſſion of a tender huſband, and other tyes will perhaps divide your affection. May the dear pledges of your love cement the union of your hearts, and may I ſee my daughter's virtues dawning in their infant minds! My letters will overflow with parental tenderneſs, and you know your's will be always acceptable to me. Ceaſe, my child, to lament an indiſpenſable abſence; reſume your uſual ſerenity, and convince ſir John, you have not vowed a love for him which you do not feel.—That gentleman now approached us. Come, my dear, ſaid he to his lady,

conquer

conquer this exceſs of melancholy. You forget you are a wife, as well as a daughter.—He turned away. Lady Raymond's eyes were fixed upon the ground, while he ſpoke; then caſting them up to heaven, ſhe ſeemed to ſupplicate for fortitude in this ſevere trial. Sir John's looks terrified me; he ſhewed no appearance of tender ſympathy, but a gloomy diſcontent overſpread his countenance. I yet tremble for lady Raymond. Dear creature! how unable is ſhe to ſupport the leaſt unkindneſs!

* * * * * *

She is gone! Mrs. Villars, her ſon and daughter-in-law have left us. Never was I witneſs to ſo heart-affecting a ſcene! Lady Raymond hung round her mother's neck in ſpeechleſs agony; Mrs. Villars claſped her to her breaſt; their tears mingled. Mr. and Mrs. Villars, though deeply affected, yet are too happy in each other to ſhare the bitterneſs of their ſiſter's anguiſh.

anguiſh. I know not when the mother and daughter would have ſeparated, if ſir John had not interrupted the tender embrace. For ſhame, lady Raymond, be more compoſed, ſaid he; you are leſs than woman! Are you not to meet again in a few months?

The amiable ſufferer lifted up her ſweet face, on which the moſt expreſſive woe was painted. Ah! ſir John, ſaid ſhe, pity and forgive my weakneſs; I will, if poſſible, be more tranquil. Then turning again to Mrs. Villars, My dear, dear mother, cried ſhe, this ſhall be my laſt farewell! embracing her. She withdrew her arms, and putting her handkerchief to her eyes, I cannot ſee you go, added ſhe, but indeed I ſhall ſoon be more eaſy.

Mrs. Villars, whoſe heart was oppreſſed with grief, immediately gave her hand to ſir John, and went down ſtairs. She ſtept into the coach, and bowed an adieu. I haſtened to lady Raymond, who was in her

her own apartment. I endeavoured to conceal my uneaſineſs, that I might diſſipate her affliction. She deſired me to leave her for a few minutes, and promiſed to meet me in the dining room, with a more ſerene countenance. I took the opportunity of ſcribling thus far, but will now attend her again.

* * * * * *

Lady Raymond attempted to aſſume a different appearance when ſhe met me, but ſhe was viſibly the greater ſufferer for the reſtraint. Lady Maynwaring came up ſoon after I re-entered the dining room, and conſented to paſs the day with us, at our earneſt deſire. She tried to divert her tender friend's thoughts from the ſubject of her concern, but the endeavour was unſucceſsful. Lady Raymond addreſſed herſelf ſeveral times to ſir John, with a ſweetneſs that ſeemed apprehenſive of having given offence. He did not behave with ſo much tenderneſs as I wiſhed; and

and I observed her heart felt his indifference, with the most acute sensibility. In the afternoon, lady Raymond's melancholy really abated, and sir John resumed his chearfulness and good humour. This alteration in him, gave his lady such delight, as made every uneasy emotion subside. Her eyes sparkled, her cheeks glowed, and she appeared in full radiance of beauty. Lady Maynwaring and I rejoiced, at leaving her in so agreeable a flow of spirits.

I was awake so early this morning that my eyes are now almost closed: I am afraid I shall scarcely add, in legible characters, that I am, with love and blessing to each dear child,

Your sincerely affectionate mother,

E. EGERTON.

LETTER LXVI.

Mrs. VILLARS to Lady RAYMOND.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I Shared too ſeverely the anguiſh of your heart, on our ſeparation, to attempt to mitigate its exceſs; but reaſon, or rather the dictates of Chriſtianity convince me, we ſhall be blameable in indulging an immoderate ſorrow. I intreat you, my Flavia, to be influenced by the ſame motive which conſoles me; and, if we conſider calmly, we ſhall own that our ſituation is in every other reſpect ſo happy, as infinitely to exceed our cauſe for afflictions. My children have ſhewn in their choice, that prudence may be blended with ſincere affection, and that true love is not the blind mutable deity painted in poetry and romance; but the offspring of reaſon, congenial with virtue, and co-exiſtent with eternity. Oh! my child, with what refined

fined tenderneſs, did I regard your dear father! and with what energy did revelation ſooth the affliction of my ſoul on his loſs, by confirming my hopes of a bliſsful re-union! Theſe, my Flavia, are extatic thoughts! they ennoble the mind, purify the heart, ſoften the unavoidable calamities of life, and heighten our reliſh of all its bleſſings. Rejoice, my dear daughter, in being one cauſe of the ſenſations I feel on the proſpect, that you and my ſoul will enjoy ſuch felicity as I have deſcribed.

Be aſſiduous in ſecuring the eſteem of your huſband. Love founded on external charms, and which only ſeeks the gratification of the ſenſes, will ſoon change its object, and be pleaſed with novelty; but where eſteem is the baſis of love, even the loweſt pleaſures of the man are exalted, and diſtinguiſh him from the animal. Never expect that your ſuperiority in beauty alone will fix your huſband's heart. Even the mere ſenſualiſt prefers novelty to beauty.

An agreeable perſon in a wife is as likely to preſerve an huſband's love as a fine one; and your mental perfections, my dear child, muſt ſecure Sir John's eſteem, if you do not render yourſelf leſs amiable in his eyes by your tears, and unavailing regrets. A wife muſt ſtudy to be always obliging, or her huſband will ſeek that complacency from others, in which ſhe fails.

Don't expect, my dear child, to meet with a *reciprocal* fund of tenderneſs from your huſband. Few men are capable of it. I never knew but one. Buſineſs and diverſions prevent its cultivation; and moſt probably it is wiſely ordained by providence, that an exquiſite degree of ſenſibility is ſeldom felt but by thoſe whoſe duties are chiefly domeſtic. Sir John has given proofs of a diſintereſted love; but perhaps he may not always be ſo attentive to the gratification of your refined tenderneſs as you wiſh. Never lie any reſtraint upon his viſits, &c. but endeavour to behave in the man-

manner which will be moſt agreeable to him. Whilſt the general tenour of his actions ſhew the conſtancy of his attachment, let not a caſual expreſſion occaſion you any uneaſineſs; for we are more frequently hurt by our own miſconſtructions, than by any intended unkindneſs. Many men miſtake the tender fears of diffidence for injurious ſuſpicions, and reſent them accordingly. Do not therefore indulge them, but cultivate every uſeful and pleaſing qualification.

I need not obſerve to *you*, my dear, that chaſtity is a purity of thought, word and action; for you are purity itſelf. I believe it is equally unneceſſary to mention to you a conſtant unremitted attention to neatneſs, and ſuch a dreſs as is moſt conformable to your huſband's inclination. Always diſtinguiſh between true delicacy and falſe ſhame. To affectation your mind is ſuperior.

Let unreſerved confidence reign between you and your huſband. It will render re-

monſtrances unneceſſary; which are more frequently thought to proceed from an affected ſuperiority, than a deſire of awakening to conviction. Appearances are often ſo deceitful, that they may warp our judgment; ſuſpicions my be injurious, and inſpire diſguſt, but confidence baniſhes apprehenſions.

My dear child, are you not too apprehenſive? Do not you ſhew a diſtruſt which may really abate Sir John's love? I will give you, my Flavia, a recital of my own weakneſs, which I hope will fortify you. Soon after I married Mr. Villars, I buried my laſt ſurviving parent and relation, ſo that all the affection of a naturally tender heart centered in him. It is impoſſible for words to deſcribe my love. He repaid it with an equal fondneſs; but my diffidence rendered me fearful, that when he ſaw other people in company lively and entertaining, he might be diſguſted by my inſipidity. I could not conquer a reſerve which made me

ſilent, when I knew he wiſhed me to impart my ſentiments. The apprehenſions of loſing any part of my huſband's regard rendered me very uneaſy. He perceived that I was melancholy, and tenderly inſiſted on knowing the cauſe. A fear of offending him kept me a while ſilent, but Mr. Villars ſtill begging I would tell him, I at laſt, burſting into tears, owned to him the diſquietude of my heart. He gazed upon me ſome minutes without anſwering; then taking my hand, My deareſt Sophia, ſaid he, I thank you for this acknowledgement. My heart gives me a delightful aſſurance, that it is firmly attached to you and you alone, yet I do not impute your fears to any particular ſuſpicions of me, but to your obſervation of the frailty of human nature in general, and to your imperfect knowledge of your own merit. Would you examine your own mind, you would find in it ſo many virtues, that the examination would ſurely enable you to ſubdue all

all apprehenſions which occaſion a ſuppreſſion of your ſentiments. I now give you a ſolemn promiſe, that to heaven and you I will be accountable for every thought, word and action; I will behave with no particular caution in your preſence, as this would introduce a conſtraint which might have dangerous conſequences. My fidelity is guarded by conſiderations of love and duty; yet I intreat of you, my deareſt Sophia, as you value my eternal happineſs, that you will tell me if any part of my conduct affect your peace. Should you think any of my amuſements have an improper tendency, or ſhould my reaſons fail of contributing to your entire ſatisfaction, conceal nothing from me. Whatever diverſions I may partake in *your* abſence, if mine cauſes you the leaſt uneaſineſs, remember that nothing is nor ought to be ſo deſirable to me as the preſervation of your happineſs. If my natural diſpoſition inclined me to a diſſipated life, I ſhould not

give this advice, nor would it be prudent in you to act in this manner. The mildeſt inſinuations, though not really injurious, would then be offenſive, and a woman who finds her huſband to be of a gay turn, muſt endeavour to appear always chearful and agreeable. Hard taſk to an ingenuous mind! yet religious conſiderations have ſupported many perſons in this arduous trial. Yours, my Sophia, ſhall be an eaſier taſk. I am perſuaded that your mind and perſon muſt ſuffer an entire change before I be able to make any compariſon to the diminution of my love and eſteem.——These aſſurances compoſed me to tranquillity, and I never afterwards indulged the painful propenſity.

I ſhall be impatient for a letter from you, and hope you will give me a pleaſing account of yourſelf.

We had an agreeable journey down.—Your brother and ſiſter are as happy as it is poſſible human beings can be.

That you may enjoy the highest temporal happiness, and be always in a state of preparation for eternity, is the constant prayer of

Your ever affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER LXVII.

Mr. VILLARS to Lady RAYMOND.

PERHAPS my dear sister might condemn me for want of affection in supporting with more calmness the separation which so much afflicted her; but she must consider, that I had with me the two persons most dear to me, and was morally convinc'd, I left her in a situation where her merit will be rewarded and conspicuous. She must pardon me for adding, I thought her grief a little too violent for the occasion. Yet, my dear Lady Raymond, I was not insensible. My mother's unparalleled tenderness must render her absence more

lamented

lamented by you, who have seldom been from under her maternal wing, and are fearful of moving in the exalted region you are now placed in. Be not too diffident, my sister. You have an excellent heart and improved understanding, and the justest sentiments of religion and virtue. Enjoy the grandeur you deserve, and be a frequent witness of our happiness.

My Isabella tells me I must now resign the pen to her. *Must*, says the saucy wife! Is this the language of obedience? Oh! these women! How difficult is it to them to submit to their conjugal vow. "What "have you not finished yet, Mr. Villars?" No, Mrs. Villars, I have a mind to exercise your patience. A very necessary virtue, let me tell you, in a wife. I will give you the pen, my love, when I have subscribed myself my dear Flavia's

Most affectionate brother,

FREDERICK VILLARS.

(Mrs. VILLARS, *in continuation.*)

THE *ſaucy wife*, as your brother calls me, will not confirm the character her huſband has given her, for ſhe will write to her dear friend and ſiſter in a truly commiſerating ſtrain. My heart truly felt for you, tho' I could not expreſs its ſympathetic tenderneſs; and yet, my dear Lady Raymond, if Sir John is as kind and affectionate a huſband as Mr. Villars, why ſhould I addreſs you in terms of condolance? It is impoſſible to deſcribe my conjugal happineſs, which, I hope, your own ſituation repreſents. Then ſuch a mother too! But let me not revive your uneaſineſs. Conſider, my beloved ſiſter, the time of your meeting is not very diſtant, and we ſhall never ſuffer a long ſeparation from each other.

Mr. Villars tells me the poſt will be gone. One line indeed would have comprehended all I have written. I meant only

only to acquaint you, I am one of the happieſt of women, and that I ſhall ever be

Your affectionate ſiſter and friend,

ISABELLA VILLARS.

LETTER LXVIII.

GEORGE RANTLEY, Eſq; to Sir JOHN RAYMOND.

IS it poſſible that you ſhould be ſuch a renegade from your profeſſions, as to be a member of the fettered ſociety? What! have you devoted yourſelf to one woman for better and worſe? I received a letter yeſterday with this information, and I can ſcarcely credit it. Prithee, be it true or falſe, give me a line; if you are thus tied, our friendſhip is looſened, for I will never have an intimate who contentedly wears the collar; and I have a notion you will ſoon be hen-pecked.——I ſhall give no account of my proceedings. I fear you

are

are not the man I once thought you; and therefore, till I know more of you, I ſhall only ſubſcribe myſelf,

Your humble ſervant,

GEORGE RANTLEY.

LETTER LXIX.

Sir JOHN RAYMOND, to GEORGE RANTLEY, Eſq;

DEAR GEORGE,

I Received your letter when my happineſs was in its meridian, and to own the truth, I was then determined not to continue the correſpondence; but man (as well as woman) is ſubject to inconſtancy. I *am* married.—I have really been happier in the poſſeſſion of one virtuous woman's perſon and affections, than in having been favourably diſtinguiſhed by many women of *faſhion* or *pleaſure*. Perhaps theſe are ſynonimous terms. My wife (unfaſhionable ſound) is the gentleſt of her ſex.

Her

Her heart, naturally prone to tenderneſs, is attached to me with ſuch an exceſs of love, as gives me no fears of dividing her affection with the profeſt danglers of the age. Her mother ſeems to poſſeſs the next place in her regard; but filial affection, though inexpreſſibly tender, is unmixed with that anxiety which is blended with her conjugal love.——But you will aſk, what were the attractions that could tempt me to commit matrimony, for you are inſenſible to the charms of a woman's mind.—And have *I* been juſt to them? Ah! George, do not aſk me.—But to proceed. My father's ſeverity made the pleaſures of the town more deſirable than perhaps they would otherwiſe have appeared; and I had been ſo long immerſed in them, that every modeſt woman was inſipid or diſguſting to my taſte 'till I ſaw Miſs Villars. Her perſon is elegantly formed; her features delicately proportioned, and I had never before ſeen ſo much

unaffected

unaffected ſweetneſs and humility expreſſed in a female countenance. I was captivated;—her looks and whole behaviour damped every preſumptuous hope. I ſaw her frequently, and loſt my reliſh for every diverſion ſhe did not partake; yet, as I knew my father would not permit me to marry her, I did not diſcloſe my paſſion; and her mother, fearful of my deſigns, carried her from town. For ſome days I was inconſolable, but a ſet of gay acquaintance once more recalled me to ſcenes of diſſipation. I had almoſt entirely forgot Miſs Villars, when my father's death gave me the power of aſking her hand. Cuſtom was ſo prevalent in me, that when no other obſtacle prevented, my own rebellious fondneſs for diſſolute pleaſures made me fluctuate. My paſſion for Miſs Villars at laſt triumphed.—I declared my love. My propoſals were accepted; for my father's rigour had this good effect, that my pleaſures were too

private

private to injure my public character. The delicate, yet unaffected tenderneſs of Flavia's heart, ſupported my paſſion. We were married at her mother's, whom I reverence, yet fear. I felt all the joy I profeſſed. Lady Raymond's was allayed by the thoughts of parting from her mother, who agreed at our requeſt to accompany us to town for a month.—I ſoon found, that a life of regularity had no charms for me, but thoſe of novelty.—Women talk of reformed rakes for huſbands, but how few are there who tread the paths of reformation? And where are the women qualified to render them happy? Accuſtomed to the various arts of the voluptuous, whoſe buſineſs it is to deceive us into pleaſure, without requiring from us the ſedulities or conſtancy of a refined paſſion; the tender ſolicitude of my wife, fatigues, conſtrains, and upbraids me. Her love renders her melancholy when we part, and occaſions an effuſion of

overflowing

overflowing fofnefs at my return. I never till now contracted an engagement which diſtreſſed me. I had always found my charmer gloomy or joyous as my humour directed. But Flavia loves me with a ſenſibility which is painful to her, and irkſome to me; I cannot feign that paſſion which is diſſipated. Her perſon and converſation have no longer thoſe charms for me, I once perceived in them. She expects from me a tenderneſs I am incapable of. I ſee other women, gay and lively when their huſbands are abſent, and quite ſatisfied with their indifference when preſent. Their wit enlivens me, I am pleaſed with their perſons, I cannot reſiſt their advances.—From my wife I experience only the anxieties of love, yet I believe her underſtanding is ſuperior to moſt women's. She has too much ſweetneſs of temper, and ſenſibility of others' pain to be a wit; yet I really believe I ſhould like her better if ſhe diverted me more.

Would

Would to God I had never married! I am ſure my wife has reaſon for the ſame wiſh, for where, with her delicate ſenſibility, could ſhe meet with a fellow mind?

What can you make of this unconnected letter, but that I am married to a too amiable woman, that I am guilty of infidelity, miſerable, and the cauſe of miſery. Adieu!

LETTER LXX.

Lady RAYMOND to Mrs. VILLARS.

THE ſight of your letter, my dear and honoured mother, gave me a painfully-pleaſing emotion. Ah! why was I ſo ſoon deprived of the happineſs your preſence always excites in me? Why, but becauſe my huſband was leſs ſolicitous to contribute to my ſatisfaction than I had reaſon to expect. Ah! madam, I do not enjoy that tender intercourſe of ſoul with ſir John, which you have often ſo feelingly deſcribed. I flattered myſelf with

the hopes of finding the tenderness of my own heart repaid by a kindred mind; but alas! Sir John's is not that refined, that ever-sedulous affection I wished to inspire! Your unequalled merit, indeed, *claimed* an exalted return of love; and such is the sensibility of my heart, that I cannot be satisfied without a reciprocal tenderness.

Fearful my melancholy might displease my husband, and attending to the suggestions of reason, serenity was soon restored to my breast. Sir John, for two days, behaved in a manner which encreased my love; but on the third he left me, and I saw him no more till one o'clock the next morning. My joy at his return made me fly to meet him. He appeared entirely indifferent, expressed no concern when I told him I had been uneasy during his unexpected absence, nor shared my delight in meeting. He only asked me why I sat up, and why I chose to be alone, when I might have spent the evening with

Lady Egerton, or some more gay acquaintance. How could you imagine I could be enough at ease, said I, to enjoy conversation, while ignorant of your safety? You mentioned no engagement, and I expected your return every moment.

He made no other answer, than that he should often be from home, and he would have me partake with my friends some of the public diversions, and not be always fretting and crying at home. He then abruptly left me. I was so shocked at his manner and expressions, that I burst into tears.

Ah! madam, is this the behaviour I must expect from a husband whom I love? Must we frequent different places of amusement? And will he be always displeased when I give him proofs of my affection? Surely my late anxieties were prophetic! I shall never more be happy! Alas! I have scarcely seen him these five days. He breakfasts in his dressing room, and goes

out immediately after he is dreſt, ſeldom returns till dinner, and then I ſee him no more till next morning. I obey his commands, and retire at eleven, but reſt I am unacquainted with. Lady Egerton and lady Maynwaring, who always find me alone, muſt be ſurprized at his abſence; but they are ſilent, and it is my duty to be ſo.

Alas! if when "the ſpirit is willing the fleſh is weak," how fatal may the conſequences moſt probably be, where the *diſpoſition* is prone to gallantry! Perhaps I am too fearful. Were my huſband even to give me repeated promiſes of fidelity, I ſhould have fears leſt confidence in his own ſtrength ſhould betray him into weakneſs. Now, ſir John conſiders his errors as faſhionable gallantries; and perhaps, if he doubted his own power of reſiſting temptations, I ſhould ſhare his fears, and think they aroſe from conviction of his own weakneſs.

Continual

Continual uneaſineſs has injured my health, and I am more altered than you can imagine. Write frequently, my dear mother, and without reſerve. There is no reaſon to fear your letters ſhould fall into ſir John's hands; he is always abſent at the time they are brought.

I thank you, madam, for your parental advice. Alas! the wretchedneſs of my ſituation can be alleviated by your letters only. Pray for me, that I may be reſtored to happineſs, or that my fortitude may be equal to the ſevere trial, which ſeems to be the appointment of providence for.

Your unhappy,
but ever dutiful daughter,
FLAVIA RAYMOND.

P. S. I can't write at preſent to my brother and ſiſter. Tell them I moſt fervently pray for the continuance of their happineſs. Oh! that I could tell them, I feel the felicity they deſcribe!

LETTER LXXI.

Sir JOHN RAYMOND to GEORGE RANTLEY, Esq.

WELL, George, I am not the henpecked husband your prophetic spirit indicated. I am still, and I believe ever shall be, an inconstant.——Let not the Beauty trust to the power of her personal charms, for securing an habitual rover who is become an husband, for he will be more pleased with a new face than with a fine one that is familiar. I swear I find it so, and for mental excellence it pleases *us* only, while the person is the object of admiration. If *I* was a modest woman I should be a very prudent one. I would never marry a rake, because he would be insensible of my real value; but lady Raymond was deceived in my character. My wife is allowed to be handsome; I know she is amiable. It gratifies my

my vanity to see the admiration she excites, and the indifference she regards it with; she treats me with such a distinguished preference as renders me the object of envy. I have sometimes considered whether I could not be perfectly satisfied with a woman who is the idol of most connoisseurs in beauty: For a short time whilst vanity reigns the paramount passion, and she can supply food for it, perhaps I might; but vanity is not my predominant failure, and if it were, it is gratified still more pleasingly. Love of the sex is my foible. Though I am pleased with my wife for placing a confidence in me, I am more inclined to abuse it. I cannot see the young and beautiful without feeling a tender admiration, nor join in the mirth of the witty without indulging dangerous emotions. But when wit and beauty combine, how irresistible are their force! To fix the attention of a gay coquet for whom humble lovers sigh in vain, would it not

be a temptation to the most resolute in virtue? I am sure it requires more fortitude to resist than I am master of.—Here love (if I may call so, a light, extinguishable, wavering flame) and vanity exult. I am glad my wife is blind to my inconstancy, I could not bear the remonstrances I own I somewhat deserve. How impossible it is to be attentive to the care of others when our own is destroyed. Why then, the friend of my soul would urge, do you not endeavour to recover it?—Because I know it is not the work of a day, and I have not sufficient resolution to accomplish it. I have tasted the sweets of virtuous love, but I have lost my relish for it. I am now too guilty to enjoy it; yet, perhaps I am not much more criminal than formerly; I was then attached only to the professedly immodest, now I am divided between these and the professedly virtuous of the fair sex, who yet are too volatile to be attentive to the preservation

of

of their characters. In what character will you consider *me*? As much as one can be, who is not a friend to himself, I am your's.

LETTER LXXIII.

Mrs. VIELARS to Lady RAYMOND.

YOUR situation distresses me, my dear child, but I exhort you never to indulge despondency, and I can enforce the precept by my example. I feel the tenderest participation in your misfortune, and offer up the most earnest supplication for your re-established happiness.

Your husband, my dear, was educated under the rigid discipline of an austere father, and restrained from the amusements frequented by others of his rank and age, which perhaps, because they were forbidden, appeared more desirable. Released from his confinement he is fascinated by pleasures which at present retain all the

attraction

attraction of novelty. He was captivated with your perſonal accompliſhments, and perhaps no otherwiſe affected by your virtues, than with fears of loſing you by a diſhonourable addreſs. He has obtained poſſeſſion of your heart and hand, but probably he is ſtill inſenſible to the charms of virtue. Your attention to me, and the melancholy which oppreſſed you even before my departure, might not only offend ſir John, but render the gaiety of others more pleaſing.—To inſpire him with a love of virtue, you muſt not preach to him grave leſſons of morality, but indulge him in thoſe amuſements which have the ſanction of reaſon. A company of ſelect friends at home, and ſometimes an agreeable party abroad will diverſify the ſcene, and a well-choſen book will afford an hour of entertainment to the moſt volatile diſpoſition. Try theſe experiments, my dear child, and do not doubt of their ſucceſs by perſeverance. Endeavour to appear chear-

ful,

ful, be always ſtudious to oblige. "To "hope for better days," ſays an excellent writer, "is promiſing to deſerve them." Remember that the duty of a wife varies with the diſpoſition of her huſband. In a word, comply with your huſband's inclinations as far as you can do ſo without prejudice to virtue. Sir John is the object of your tendereſt regard, and I hope his future conduct will prove him to be worthy of the preference you gave him. If you deſpair of his conſtancy, your love will abate, and your attempts to pleaſe him become unanimated. I believe, and hope you are the miſtreſs of his heart, and that you will guide its movements till it attain a ſettled habit of virtue; he will then prefer your converſation to any foreign amuſements, and his mind will be enlarged by a mutual communication of ſentiments and opinions.

I flatter myſelf you will ſoon confirm theſe delightful preſages, and that every

future

future information will delineate a perfect picture of connubial happineſs. Your brother and ſiſter rejoice in the hope that you have overcome your depreſſion of ſpirits at our parting. I have mentioned nothing of your ſubſequent uneaſineſs.

Our affectionate reſpects attend you. I am ſhocked at the occaſion that requires me to write a letter unfit for your huſband's peruſal, and which I muſt intreat you to burn, to avoid a diſcovery of your having intruſted me with ſuch a ſecret. I hope an unreſerved confidence in each other will ſoon be eſtabliſhed between you.

Farewel, my dear child! Put your truſt in God, and he will be either your ſupport or deliverer.

Believe me to be

Your ever tenderly affectionate mother,
and faithful friend,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER LXXIII.

Lady RAYMOND to Mrs. VILLARS.

Dearest and ever honoured MADAM,

THE contents of my last letter entitled me to your compassion; but I have reason to fear that the subject of this will incur your disapprobation. Oh! my dear mother, I can no longer address you with the delightful confidence of self-esteem. I am involved in all the bitterness of remorse! I am miserable in that success, from which I expected to be restored to happiness! Unworthy child of so excellent a parent! This is not my first offence against you and my own character; but ah! madam, if *you* desert me, I shall be wretched beyond redress. Can you forgive me? But you know not the nature of my fault. I will impart it with the utmost sincerity. Alas! the only atonement I can now make to you!

I fol-

I followed the advice in your letter. I invited my friends and ſuch of my gay acquaintance as I knew were agreeable to Sir John. I accompanied them to the Playhouſe, &c. I appeared chearful, for I endeavour'd to baniſh thought. Sir John was pleaſed, but not with me; he mixed with the company at home, and I ſaw him at public places, but he never went with me, nor took the leaſt notice of me. He ſeemed to conſider it as a breach of politeneſs to be ſeen with his wife. Judge, madam, what I ſuffered! Several days paſſed in this manner. I was diſtreſſed at my ineffectual attempts; I knew not how to act! —A fatal deſign entered my imagination. I had obſerved that Sir John look'd diſſatisfied, if he ſaw me converſing with any of his own ſex, and this obſervation ſuggeſted to me a ſcheme, which ſucceeded, and has made me miſerable.

Amongſt the gentlemen who were acquainted with my huſband, and perſonally known

known to me, is one sir William Burroughs. He is handsome, genteel, lively, and polite. He was at the play last Monday, and sate in the same box with me. He addressed himself to me several times. Sir John, who sate in the opposite box with some ladies, saw us, and appeared visibly disconcerted. I own I triumphed at a proof of jealousy, which I thought manifested some remains of affection for me; desirous to heighten it, I increased his fears. I talked with Sir William; I assumed an air of gaiety, and my husband's uneasiness was so violent, that he left his company and entered our box. Sir William accosted him with his usual freedom, but was answered coolly by my husband; who placing himself near me, gazed on me with such an air of apprehensive tenderness, that I exulted in my success.

Sir William, who imagined, I suppose, that he had made a conquest, addressed to me a superfluity of compliments, but I could

could no longer trifle with Sir John's uneasiness. I asked him if he chose to sit on the front seat, and made room for him. His eyes sparkled with that tender joy which used to animate them, when he professed himself my lover. I endeavoured to convince him by my behaviour, that my heart was firmly attached to him; but as the formidable Sir William still fluttered about me, he did not resume his usual chearfulness that evening.

Yesterday he attended me to a private concert: Sir William Burroughs happened to be present, who spoke to me with such a confident air, that I was convinced I had been guilty of great imprudence. I shunned him with the utmost care; but finding he persisted in pursuing me with hateful professions of love, (Oh! how am I fallen from the dignity of virtue!) I pretended illness, and begged of Sir John to see me home; he complied, with an eagerness that expressed his dislike of Sir William's assiduities.

Since this affair, my husband has treated me with the most engaging tenderness; but my heart so accuses me for encouraging this coxcomb, and sporting with my husband's anxiety, that his present behaviour afflicts me more than his late unkindness. —Alas! madam, to what do I owe his present attachment? He is not recalled by the love of virtue; he is uninfluenced by the dictates of religion; I am not the object of his esteem, but the inspirer of a mere transient passion. He fears to lose me, yet perhaps, vanity rather than love causes his jealousy; and when his fears subside his indifference will return. But whatever happens, I am determined to preserve a steady adherence to my duty.

If any change appear in my husband, I will acquaint you with it. Will a sincere contrition for my offence entitle me to hope forgiveness? Be assured I feel the most lively penitence! Ah! madam, restore to

me your good opinion, without which I have an additional reaſon to ſubſcribe myſelf, my dear, honoured parent,

Your unhappy daughter,

FLAVIA RAYMOND.

LETTER LXXIV.

Sir JOHN RAYMOND to GEORGE RANTLEY, Eſq.

SO you attribute my ſilence to ſome new amour,—Faith, George, there has been ſomething novel in my late attachment. Can you believe it? My wife has been the cauſe of my neglecting to write. Deſpairing, I ſuppoſe, of the ſucceſs of any other means, ſhe attempted to regain my heart by exciting my jealouſy. Her plot ſucceeded, the gudgeon was terribly wounded by the hook. My vanity was piqued, and I really believe ſome ſparks of love were rekindled. She perceived it, and for a time enjoyed my uneaſineſs. But her natural ſweetneſs

ſoon

ſoon influenced her to prefer my peace to every other conſideration. For a few days ſhe poſſeſſed my undivided attention, but ſecurity again produced indifference; and, to confeſs a truth to you, I now am unfaithful with leſs compunction than ever, for my wife is degraded in my eſteem. I will tell you how I reconcile the matter to myſelf: Lady Raymond in this trial of her power muſt aſſume the appearance of a coquet, and encourage the addreſs of men of gallantry. Is this the part of rigid virtue? Can ſhe afterwards repel their attacks? Experience teaches me the whole force of this argument.—Therefore, if the end be laudable, the means were erroneous. She was alſo actuated by a lurking vanity, a dependence on her own charms, which I did not think her capable of. I have heard many good women ſay, Oh! if their huſbands were unfaithful they would make them endure the torments they occaſioned. And ſo the dear creatures, moſt of them

to gratify revenge, a few to ſecure their huſband's conſtancy, render themſelves unworthy of their eſteem and affection. No wife has a chance for her huſband's regard, who does not endeavour to excel in every good quality; for as to mere beauty, it is only inoffenſive in a wife. Where men have good diſpoſitions, I *have* known them overcome faſhionable follies, and become very much attached to their wives if really amiable. But theſe examples are very rare. As to my wife, I do not believe ſhe indulged a ſpirit of revenge; but I think that if ſhe imagined it neceſſary to revive my love by jealouſy, ſhe muſt have determined to preſerve this flame by adding freſh fuel. Oh! prudence, what a dupe wert thou in this affair. I ſaw my wife condemned her own conduct even before I ſhewed its inefficacy by my behaviour. I *do* feel ſome pity for her, and yet I can't help rejoicing, that ſhe is not wholly faultleſs. Her errors ſeem to juſ-

tify mine. I did once think, George, of following the example of a royal pair, but it is not sufficiently fashionable to conquer an habitual inconstancy. The wife of a libertine should be particularly attentive to the preservation of her character. Her situation is more dangerous, and her husband expects her to be more free from faults than any. We will not debate how reasonable the expectation is.—It is sufficient for me, and ought to be for the ladies, that it is universally expected. Adieu, George.

I am, your's, &c.

J. RAYMOND.

LETTER LXXV.

Lady MAYNWARING to Sir RICHARD MAYNWARING.

DON'T expect to be addreſt in the tender dialect. I make no profeſſions. —I hate the very name of love.—I entirely give up the prophetic art. Sir John

Raymond is an odious fellow. I detest him. Recollecting I had not ſeen Lady Raymond for more than a fortnight, I this morning walked up to her houſe, and introduced myſelf without form. She was at breakfaſt alone in her dreſſing room. Her looks were pale and emaciated. Well, my dear, ſaid I, where is your ſpouſy? I have not ſeen Sir John, anſwered ſhe, ſince yeſterday morning; and to confeſs the truth, I am very uneaſy on that account. But he told you, without doubt, of his engagement, and then you ſhould conquer all uneaſineſs for a ſhort abſence. You don't expect, nor I hope deſire, he ſhould always be with you. Sir Richard has left me for a whole fortnight. I love the good man, but I am perfectly eaſy without him.

Indeed, Lady Maynwaring, replied my friend, though Sir John's company is always agreeable to me, yet I am not ſo unreaſonable as to wiſh he ſhould give up

any

any amuſement. But he leaves me without imparting his deſign; ſurely this is unkind.

Whilſt we were talking, Sir John came in. Good morning to you, Lady Mayn-waring, ſaid he; this is an unuſual favour. What are you ſtill a widow? But you are one of the gay world. You are not a domeſtic animal. He did not pay the leaſt attention to his lady, who I ſaw was affected. She tried to diſperſe a tear, and reaching out her hand, My dear, ſaid ſhe, with great emotion, you neglect your poor Flavia. Pho! prithee, Lady Raymond, ſaid he, in an authoritative tone, and throwing himſelf into a diſtant chair, it is time to give over theſe fooleries.—You was at Lady Newport's rout laſt night. Is not Miſs Newport a divine creature, madam? to me.

The wretch ſhocked me. He appeared entirely different from his former ſelf. He ſaw his lady's uneaſineſs, but ſaw it with-

out diſturbance. Oh! if he had been *my* huſband, how I would have tyrannized in my turn!—He added, Will your ladyſhip permit me to eſcort you to the play this evening? If Lady Raymond chuſes to go, Sir, ſaid I, it will give me pleaſure to accompany *her*. My heart diſdained the fellow. He looked confounded, and I continued. As little of the domeſtic animal as you think me, Sir, I ſeldom go to public places without my huſband. But then, indeed, he is no Baſhaw. He is neither apiſhly fond, nor faſhionably aſhamed of his wife.

Sir John appeared ſtill more diſconcerted, when luckily for him, ſome ladies entered, and gave a turn to the converſation. They were Court-belles, who came only to coquet with the huſband, and to inſult the wife by exciting her jealouſy. One young flirt was ſo horridly provoking, that I could not help correcting her. She was talking of the *two youngeſt* Mr. S—'s. Pray, Miſs, ſaid

ſaid I, which is the *youngeſt* of the two? Mr. Edmund, ſhe believed. Then I preſumed Mr. John was *not* the *youngeſt*. The girl look'd like a ſimpleton, but ſoon recovered, and began to *re-ogle* Sir John. She even attempted to be witty; but I once more ſilenced, and made her pout by telling her, her wit ſeem'd rather *out of humour*. I was in hopes her volubility would have revived no more, but it ſoon broke forth again. She praiſed a moſt egregious fop. He was a ſweet fellow, had a moſt bewitching taſte in dreſs, was not only lively but ſenſible. She thought Miſs B—— a happy creature to attract his notice. I never heard before, ſaid I, of Mr. L——'s ſenſe; but I believe Miſs B—— will ſoon *make him ſenſible* that ſhe deſpiſes a fop and a coxcomb.

Oh! ſhe was aſtoniſhed at my want of taſte. Truly, Miſs, ſaid I, my taſte is too refin'd to reliſh ſuch a meſs of inſipidity, affectation and folly; whether cover'd by a ſcarlet

a ſcarlet coat, or a *tiſſue petticoat*, they are equally my averſion.

This hint could not be miſtaken. The girl was abaſhed into ſilence, but her countenance glowed with malice and reſentment. Sir John too was humbled into diffidence. The ladies were tired with his taciturnity, and ſoon took leave. He eſcorted them to the coach, and returned no more.

Lady Raymond attempted to calm her own uneaſineſs, and to excuſe her huſband, by indulging an imagination that ſomething abroad had diſturbed him, which he concealed from tenderneſs. I was too *prudent* to deſtroy her hopes, but I ſaw it was ſome ſubtle demon *at home in his own breaſt* that haunted him. I left Lady Raymond rather more eaſy.

Upon my word, Sir Richard, your merit upon compariſon riſes to the *higheſt degree* in the *barometer* of my opinion; you muſt endeavour not to fall down to *changeable*.

This

This Raymond was one of the *paſſionate lovers.* "Oh! he could never be happy "till Miſs Villars was his wife. 'Twas mere "exiſtence, not life, without her." We are apt to think love profeſſions as true as goſpel, when alas! they are in general merely *apocryphal.* Sir John was ſmitten with a fine form which "ſoon grew familiar"—*You* were violently enamoured with my face, ſhape and graces, and yet we are tolerably happy. We live a kind of—"as "it were"—*yawniſh*, very frequently, but never quarrelſome. But you admired my livelineſs, and pray do me the juſtice to own I am ſtill *very entertaining.* We taſte none of the exquiſite delights of refined lovers, but then we eſcape their painful ſenſibilities. I would not exchange ſituations with any perſon. There's for you, Sir Richard. Only continue as good as you are now, and I ſhall find no difficulty in remaining

Your dutiful and affectionate wife,

ANNE MAYNWARING.

P. S. I shan't be sorry to see you at home again.

LETTER LXXVI.

Lady RAYMOND to Mrs. VILLARS.

I PROMISED to write to my dear mother if any change appeared in Sir John: A change there is indeed, but my sufferings are now deserved. Good God! that an husband should be the inflictor!

Sir William Burroughs soon perceived that I despised him, and ceased to follow me. My husband, relieved from farther apprehensions, has relapsed into his former indifference; but I have deprived myself of the right of complaint! Yet it was not vanity, it was not malice, revenge, nor contempt, that incited me, as my behaviour afterwards might have convinced him. It was the hope of reviving his tenderness. Alas! he felt for me a passion too impetuous to be permanent, and his late appear-

appearance of affection was, as I feared, only the effect of an alarmed vanity. My misfortunes have taught me to examine the motives of my actions. Ambition first pleaded Sir John's cause; a paſſion too foreign from my natural diſpoſition to be laſting. His aſſiduous tenderneſs, the ſincerity of his attachment, which was apparent from the ſuperiority of his rank and fortune; the agreeableneſs of his perſon, all conſpired in his favour, and I ſurrendered my heart to a ſecond intruder; my love was leſs violent, but more rational than my firſt inclination. The thoughts of parting from you, allayed the happineſs of an union, which ſeemed to be cemented by mutual affection. You know the reſt. I have only to add a requeſt, that I may receive an anſwer immediately. Perhaps your wiſdom may propoſe ſome method of alleviating the diſtreſs of

Your dutiful and affectionate,
tho' diſtreſſed daughter,
FLAVIA RAYMOND.

LETTER LXXVII.

Mrs. VILLARS to Lady RAYMOND.

MY DEAR DAUGHTER,

YOU blame your late inadvertence with so much ſeverity, that though I muſt diſapprove, I cannot condemn. Endeavour to conquer the melancholy that now oppreſſes you, and try to convince ſir John, that however miſtaken you were in the means, the end propoſed was the recovery of his affections. It is certain, that a woman whoſe huſband is known to be gay, and to behave to her with indifference, cannot be too circumſpect in her conduct to the men, leſt ſhe encourage an improper addreſs. Sir John, conſcious he had not behaved to you in a manner due to your merit, was alarmed at the diſtinction with which you treated ſir William Burroughs. It is moſt probable his love revived with his fears, for I really think

vanity had the leaſt ſhare in his emotions. I muſt confeſs, he does not ſeem to be actuated by thoſe refined ſentiments which are the ſupport of the tender paſſion; but if you perſevere in your attempts to pleaſe, you will implant in his breaſt the ſeeds of virtue, and be rewarded with the fruits.

Your expectations of matrimonial felicity were not derived from your general obſervations on life. You formed an idea of mankind from that pattern of conſummate excellence, your dear father; but I believe I may truly ſay, "I ne'er ſhall look upon "his like again." All conditions when eſtabliſhed in virtue are conſiſtent with *human* happineſs; but none are free from natural evils, leſt we forget that we are only probationers for eternity. Remember, my dear, that human nature is "made "perfect through ſufferings," and that a ſuperior degree of bliſs will be the reward of ſuperior virtue.—To contemn a fickle lover is meritorious, but to reclaim an unfaithful

faithful husband is an exalted proof of virtue.—Your prudent deportment to the men, will soon be an assurance to sir John of your just claim to his esteem. Your assiduous, unremitted endeavour to oblige him, cannot escape his observation, nor be observed without exciting a passion more tender than gratitude.——Take comfort then, my dear Flavia; I applaud your determination of acting in a strict conformity with your duty. Be assured, that if it be even possible (which I cannot suspect) for your husband to remain insensible to the united efforts of virtue, sweetness and beauty, you will preserve that delightful self approbation, for the loss of which nothing can be offered as an equivalent.

Your brother and sister will be in town a few hours after this letter, having received intelligence that Mr. Leicester is dangerously ill. I hope their presence will enliven your spirits, and have a salu-

tary

any effect upon your health. Do not make a confidant of either. Your duty requires from you the preservation of your husband's honour.

If you give me a pleasing information of yourself, perhaps I may congratulate in person your recovered serenity.

I am, my dearest child,

your ever affectionate mother,

and truly sympathizing friend,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER LXXVIII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. VILLARS.

MY DEAR FRIEND!

I Feel a concern equal to my affection for you, at the thought of wounding your peace; and I would not be the intelligencer of unwelcome tidings, if I did not believe that the means of redress are in your power only. Alas, madam, lady Raymond is not happy! Sir John is not

the man our wiſhes repreſented him. Her tears and altered looks gave me reaſon to think ſhe had ſome latent cauſe of uneaſineſs, of which I am now convinced.

Yeſterday having ſeen ſir John paſs my door in his chariot, I went to ſit an hour with lady Raymond. I never ſend up my name, and as I went before the time of faſhionable viſits, I entered the dreſſing room without ceremony. My friend was not there. I met her woman on the ſtairs, who told me her lady was in her own chamber, and ſhe believed would not like any company, for ſhe had locked her door and would not admit *her*. I rapped gently, in hopes lady Raymond might wiſh to ſee an intimate friend, and on hearing my voice ſhe unlocked the door.——She attempted to conceal her face, but her ſpeech betrayed her. I ventured to preſs her to confide in me. She then turned on me her eyes, which were ſwelled and red, and the moſt agonizing diſtreſs was painted

on

on her countenance. Her tears flowed afresh at my ſolicitations, but ſhe remained ſilent. At laſt, wringing her hands with a diſtracted air, Oh! do not aſk me, ſaid ſhe, leſt I increaſe by my own miſconduct the weight of my misfortunes!—Your looks are a tacit confeſſion, anſwered I; ſir John is certainly unfaithful.—To what indignities, exclaimed the weeping ſufferer, have I been ſubjected!—My own woman has inſulted me! My huſband has forſaken me! I cannot conceal it.—My heart will break, if I deny it this tranſient relief.—But, oh! all you can do, is only to pity me.

I uſed every argument my friendſhip ſuggeſted, to alleviate her affliction, but all were ineffectual.—Her eyes were covered with an handkerchief, and her ſobs pierced my ſoul. The violence of her grief at length deprived her of the ſenſe of ſuffering, and ſhe ſunk back in her chair. Alarmed at this ſight, I was going to ſum-

mon her woman, but a moment's recollection made me alter my purpoſe. It was ſome time before ſhe recovered: your letter was brought up ſoon after; I took it at the door, not chuſing lady Raymond ſhould be ſeen. She ſnatched and kiſſed it eagerly. My brother and ſiſter are coming to town to ſee Mr. Leiceſter, ſaid ſhe, and my mother gives me ſome reaſon to think ſhe deſigns following them, but alas! upon conditions beyond my power. This information ſome weeks ago would have made me compleatly happy, but now I wiſh only to be releaſed from life, and to ſpare my friends the pain of ſeeing my miſery.—Then pauſing—I have betrayed my huſband! added ſhe, my mother recommends to me ſecrecy, even to theſe dear relations, and I have betrayed my huſband! —Mrs. Villars, ſaid I, was fearful the knowledge of ſir John's unkindneſs might occaſion a quarrel between him and your brother, to the entire deſtruction of the family's

family's peace, but ſhe does not extend the caution to me.—I then requeſted ſhe would give her reaſons for ſuſpecting her huſband. She told me, ſhe had been convinced for ſome time that his heart was eſtranged from her, but had no ſuſpicion of the object of his preſent attachment till that morning; when on giving her woman a gentle rebuke for repeated negligence, ſhe anſwered in ſo inſolent a manner as aſtoniſhed, and even terrified her, that ſhe had ſcarcely power to bid her leave the room. The room-maid hearing lady Raymond's woman ſpeak in an elevated tone, went into the chamber, and was ſurprized to find her lady the perſon ſpoke to, but dropt a hint, that it was no wonder Mrs. Jewſon was ſo ſaucy, when ſhe met with ſuch encouragement. Lady Raymond haſtily aſked, From whom? and the maid anſwered, that to her certain knowledge, ſir John and Mrs. Jewſon met every day at a milliner's, for that ſhe had

watched them.—The poor lady's narration was interrupted by ſobs and tears. She concluded with telling me, ſhe fell into fainting fits on hearing the maid's dreadful ſtory:—That ſhe was juſt recovered from one, and had diſmiſſed the ſervant with injunctions of ſilence when I went up.

I ſtaid the evening with lady Raymond, who continued extremely dejected. When I begged of her to apply to you for advice, ſhe anſwered, her date of life would be ſo ſhort, ſhe ſometimes thought of writing only a laſt adieu.—I will now lay down my pen, and not conclude my letter till to-morrow.

* * * * *

I am this moment returned from lady Raymond. I found her in bed, and knew by her looks, before ſhe told me, that ſhe had no reſt laſt night.—Indeed, my dear Mrs. Villars, I muſt intreat your immediate preſence. I tremble for the event: Lady Raymond is certainly in

danger,

danger, if sir John persists in his cruel neglect. Mr. Villars's love for his sister may engage him in a quarrel with her unkind husband. Come then, dearest madam, immediately. Do not think me impertinently officious. I have said more than I ought to so tender a parent; but be assured, my love for you and this dear creature occasions so lively a zeal. The happiness of your family is really essential to the completion of her's, who is,

Dear Mrs. Villars,

Your affectionately faithful,

E. EGERTON.

LETTER LXXIX.

Mr. VILLARS to Mrs. VILLARS.

Dear and honoured MADAM,

I Can give you a satisfactory account of my father's situation. We found his fever much abated last night on our arrival, and this day he has had no return of it.

I deferred till this morning, a viſit to my ſiſter, when leaving my Iſabella with her father, I took coach to ſir John Raymond's. Even *your* fortitude, madam, will be ſhaken by my information; but, as I muſt beg you would follow us to town, it is neceſſary I ſhould prepare you for a melancholy interview.

I aſked if my ſiſter was at home; the ſervant told me ſhe was confined to her chamber by illneſs. You had informed me ſhe was not quite well. Eager to ſee her, and thinking you had prepared her to expect me, I determined to go without ceremony to her dreſſing-room. I entered and found no perſon there; but as the door of her bed-chamber was open, I ſoftly ſtept to it. Good God! madam, how impoſſible is it to expreſs what I felt on ſeeing my ſiſter! Aſtoniſhment and grief rendered me ſpeechleſs, and I ſtood ſome minutes unobſerved. She was laid upon a couch; her face was bathed in

tears,

tears, her air dejected, and every feature diſcompoſed.

Sir John was lolling careleſly on the window ſeat, humming a tune; his eyes fixed on a young woman who ſtood by my ſiſter, and who ſeemed quite inſenſible to the ſadneſs of that dear object of my attention. I ſhall go down to my dreſſing-room, child, ſaid he, caſting a look of indifference on lady Raymond. I ſtarted on hearing him ſpeak, and they then ſaw me. I ran to my ſiſter and embraced her. She was too weak to ſupport the emotion of joy, but fainted in my arms. The young perſon, whom I now recollected to be my ſiſter's woman, took up a bottle of water with ſuch compoſure, that I ſnatched it from her. For Heaven's ſake, ſir John, ſaid I, what is the matter with this dear creature?—She has been in a low ſpirited way ſome time, anſwered he, a good deal confuſed; and ſhe will not go into company as I would have her.

Whilſt I was employed in aſſiſting the woman to recover my ſiſter, ſir John ſlipped down ſtairs: Lady Egerton came up ſoon after; ſhe ſaw my uneaſineſs. Your ſiſter, ſaid ſhe, is in a very weak condition. London does not agree with her, I believe. I hope Mrs. Villars will be here ſhortly, and prevail upon lady Raymond to accompany her into the country.

I was too much diſordered to anſwer. My ſiſter's condition pierced me to the ſoul. Her ſenſes returned, when giving me a look of inexpreſſible anguiſh, Ah! brother, I am unable to enjoy your converſation, ſaid ſhe, faintly—I can ſcarcely ſpeak—How does my dear ſiſter?—Give me one embrace, and let me ſee you again when I am better.

I found ſhe was not then deſirous of detaining me, and claſping her to my breaſt, I begged ſhe would endeavour to reſume

reſume her uſual ſerenity, which would ſoon re-eſtabliſh her health.

On leaving her I ſtept into ſir John's dreſſing-room. He had put on his hat and ſword to go out. His colour changed on ſeeing me. Surely, ſir John, ſaid I, my ſiſter is in a dangerous ſtate. Has ſhe had any advice? Upon my ſoul, anſwered he, ſhe is a little unaccountable. It is a nervous complaint. She is too much alone. —I ſhall ſee Doctor B——, he ſhall viſit her.—He then called his man and told him he wanted his attendance. In a ſlight manner he bade me good-morrow, and ran down immediately.—His behaviour offends me. But my ſiſter claims all my attention. Was Iſabella in her weak condition, I ſhould—Great God! the very thought almoſt diſtracts me! Yet ſir John is unmoved by his wife's ſufferings. I love my ſiſter with more than fraternal affection, and am aſtoniſhed at his indifference.

My

My beſt beloved is gone to lady Raymond. I will not cloſe my letter till ſhe comes home.

* * * * * *

Mrs. Villars gives me a melancholy relation. If any thing can effect my ſiſter's recovery, it will be your preſence. Lady Egerton and my father requeſt that you would favour them with your company, and conſider their houſes as your home; but I know your tenderneſs will not permit you to leave my ſiſter till ſhe is better. I am, deareſt madam, (with wiſhes you may find us all happier)

Your dutiful ſon,

FREDERICK VILLARS.

P. S. Accept our beſt reſpects.

LETTER LXXX.

Lady RAYMOND to Mrs. VILLARS.

Deareſt, ever honoured MADAM,

FORGIVE the weakneſs of your daughter, who cannot deny herſelf the melancholy

lancholy conſolation of taking a laſt fare-well! I ſhall give you pain in telling you the awful moment of my diſſolution is very near. That perhaps before this letter reaches you I ſhall be no more! But do not, madam, lament my death. Alas! I was not formed for conjugal felicity. Born with a heart too tender, and indulged by your goodneſs in every wiſh, I expected the ſame ever-aſſiduous affection would actuate the huſband of my choice. Deluſive hope! which unprepared me for the natural viciſſitudes of the human diſpoſition.

A degree of tenderneſs in my huſband inferior to my own, would have prevented my enjoying perfect happineſs; at leaſt that refined delight, of which I had formed the moſt exalted ideas: but, indeed, madam, I *think* that though I might have ſuffered from a huſband's want of equal ſenſibility, yet I could have conquered my uneaſineſs, and been reconciled to a con-

a constitutional inequality of tenderness, whilst assured of his constant affection; but to think that sir John's infidelity destroys not only *my temporal*, but endangers *his eternal happiness*, what wife, who wishes her husband to become partaker of her future felicity, can with fortitude support the reflection?

When I had fixed my determination to become sir John Raymond's wife, I *sometimes* feared my want of merit would subject me to the misfortune I now experience; but this apprehension did not *dwell* upon my mind. A separation from you was my most poignant affliction. Sir John was displeased at my melancholy. Ah! could he fear that a tender, dutiful child, would make a less affectionate wife? No; his heart is incapable of a faithful attachment.—But whilst I accuse my husband, I forget to confess my own imprudence. I have made lady Egerton my confidant. Yet disobedience to you does not aggra-

date my faults. I had disclosed the sad secret before I received your letter.—My woman, who is one cause of my sufferings, alarmed by guilt, acquainted sir John with her fears that I had complained to lady Egerton. He insulted me in Jewson's presence. Even my weak state of health did not excite his compassion. My brother surprized me in tears. What can he think?—Good God! what dreadful disturbance may I occasion! I am unable to support the horrid thought.

* * * * *

I was constrained to lay aside my pen for a few minutes. Your prudence, madam, can allay the vehemence of anger.—The unhappy disturber of your tranquillity, and the object of sir John's aversion, will soon cease to afflict *you* and disgust *him*.

Farewel! my ever honoured mother! Oh God! 'tis terrible to think that I shall see you no more in this world! yet 'tis

best it should be so. Farewel! I will not add for ever, for we shall meet again in eternity!

LETTER LXXXI.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

MY DEAR CHILD,

YOU desire me to be very particular in my information of the present state of Lady Raymond's health. I fear she has but few days to live. What a ravage has distress made in her fine frame! And in how short a time!

Mrs. Villars arrived in town last night, and came directly to my house. Her looks gave me a faithful copy of her mind. She was speechless for several minutes, and I was incapable of breaking the awful silence. —At length, she uttered—My child!—my child! Tears were my only answer, but she understood their meaning. I must see her, continued she, will you prepare her for an interview!—I will follow you.

I ordered

I ordered my coach immediately to lady Raymond's, and found her in better ſpirits than I had ſeen her for ſeveral days. After I had been ſeated a few minutes, I have written, ſaid ſhe, a laſt farewel to my dear mother; but methinks I wiſh to ſee her once again. I have a thouſand things to mention, which I could not write, and I would expire in her arms.

This was a good opportunity of diſcloſing my errand. Could you, anſwered I, ſupport the ſight of Mrs. Villars? Would not the joy be too much for you? Not at all, reſumed ſhe, eagerly; indeed I could bear it.—Perhaps, ſhe is come.—— Tell me truly, lady Egerton, You look as if you brought good news.

I ventured then to inform her, that Mrs. Villars was really in town, and I believed would be with her in a few moments. Lady Raymond's eyes ſparkled with that intelligence which uſed to animate them; ſhe liſted them to Heaven, and claſping

her hands, exclaimed in a joyful tone, I thank thee! O my God! Every wish is accomplished in this gracious permission.

I left her, and waited in the dining-room my friend's arrival. She soon appeared. I conducted her to lady Raymond's apartment. Mrs. Villars had collected all her fortitude, and appeared with such a dignity of sorrow, as commanded respectful admiration, even more than tender sympathy. Lady Raymond, with an emotion too powerful for her weakness, threw herself at her mother's feet. All the parent was then conspicuous in Mrs. Villars. She embraced her daughter with the utmost affection; then raising her, and gazing eagerly upon her, a visible discomposure took possession of her features. Lady Raymond had fallen into a fit. It is impossible for my pen to paint this scene. My heart was never so painfully agitated.

It was with difficulty we recovered the poor lady. My friend and I helped her

to bed, from whence I fear she will never rise again.——She fixed her eyes stedfastly on her mother, and held her hand to her lips, but could not speak for some time. When she had regained strength, *Will* you stay with me, madam? said she: Will you render me the last kind offices? Mrs. Villars could not answer. We sat down on the bed-side, and lady Raymond sunk insensibly into a gentle slumber. My friend expressed a desire of knowing whether sir John was at home; I told her that neither he nor Mrs. Jewson had been seen for some days. She determined not to leave her daughter's house; but, as she was fatigued with her journey, I insisted on her going to bed, and promised to stay with lady Raymond till my usual bed time, when my woman should come and sit up with her. Mrs. Villars sent a line to her son, requesting to see him and his lady to-morrow morning.

* * * * *

Lady Raymond had a tolerable night. Mr. and Mrs. Villars have been here, and promiſe to return again in the afternoon.

* * * * * *

I have been preſent at an intereſting converſation. Lady Raymond called us to her bed-ſide after breakfaſt. My dear mother, ſaid ſhe, in a faint, but articulate voice, anſwer without reſerve the queſtion I am going to aſk you. Was I not blameable in diſcloſing even to you, my huſband's unkindneſs? It is of conſequence to my peace, that you ſhould be perfectly ingenuous.

I will be ſo, my deareſt Flavia, replied Mrs. Villars. Your information certainly leſſen'd my good opinion of Sir John; and it is the duty of a wife to place her huſband's actions in the moſt advantageous light. There are faults in a huſband, by which a wife *ought not* to be the ſufferer, but none which can juſtify her for rendering him an object of contempt.

Perſons

Perſons in your unhappy ſituation are generally too apt to ſeek the conſolation of pity, rather than the proper means of redreſs. *You*, my dear, were influenced by a deſire of reclaiming your huſband; but inſtead of conſulting your own reaſon, and imploring the aſſiſtance of the Almighty, you complained to me, and abandoned yourſelf to deſpair. I know, my beloved child, that your trial was ſevere, and I am convinced very few have been equal to ſuch a one. I do not condemn, but pity the weakneſs of human nature, which finds it difficult to act in this caſe without precipitation. The occaſion requires a diſpaſſionate manner of thinking, of which few are capable. It was my duty to give you the advice you ſolicited, and I now make it my requeſt, that you will endeavour to recover your health. We will then conſider on the means of regaining, and fixing your huſband's affections. Try

to live, my dear daughter, and we ſhall all be happy.

It is in vain, anſwered lady Raymond, —it is impoſſible. And oh! madam, I muſt confeſs, tho' with conſcious ſhame, that my love for my huſband is weaken'd by his unkindneſs. Am I not criminal? No, my dear child, cryed the affectionate parent, no, you are not criminal. If your heart feels leſs of the tender ſentiment for your huſband, I know it is ſtill anxious for his eternal happineſs. Do not conſider him as a votary of pleaſure, but think you behold him a prey to the moſt fatal intoxication, or imagine you ſee him wounded by the moſt poignant ſtings of remorſe; then, though your love be really diminiſhed, your pity will be increaſed. Your reſentment will ſubſide, you will extend your forgiveneſs, and—Ah! madam, interrupted lady Raymond, did I ſay I loved him leſs? I deceived myſelf and you. He is as dear to me as ever. Oh! that I could

could claſp him to my heart! But he ſhuns me, he diſtruſts—he deſpiſes me! She fell back in her bed, overcome by the agitations of her mind. Mrs. Villars and I ſupported her. Strong convulſions ſeized her, and have left her extremely weakened. She promiſed to try if ſhe could ſleep, and I employed the time in writing to you.

* * * * *

What accumulated miſery may this vile Sir John occaſion! Mr. Villars ſent for us down into the dining-room. My woman had attended lady Raymond ſince the flight of her own, and was left with her while we complied with the ſummons. We found Mr. Villars walking about the room. His looks were diſordered, and expreſſed indignation blended with deſpair. As ſoon as we entered, Sir John's behaviour, madam, ſaid he, muſt give you at leaſt as much uneaſineſs as it does me. His abſence, his late indifference to my ſiſter

and me, ſhocked and incenſed me; but I am now almoſt mad with rage. I have ſeen lord B——: he has taken into keeping a woman who was my ſiſter's ſervant, and he told me this afternoon, ſhe had been miſtreſs to my brother, but had deſerted him. He added, he ſuppoſed this affair had occaſioned my ſiſter's illneſs, that he wondered ſhe ſhould regard ſo common a matter; and concluded with a laugh, that he was ſure I ſhould not betray his miſtreſs to her old lover, tho' if I did, he would be her protector. I had too much contempt for lord B—— to throw away any advice upon him, and indeed he turned from me too ſuddenly to admit of my reply.

Judge, madam, by your own emotions, what I felt, and ſtill feel! Shall I not ſearch out this mean wretch, confront him with his guilt, and expoſe him to the whole world? He ſhall be known to be a villain. Lady Egerton, to you I have no reſerve;

Mrs.

Mrs. Villars ſat with her eyes fixed upon the ground. A gloomy thoughtfulneſs overſpread her brow. Her ſon's impatience again broke forth. I wiſh from my ſoul, cried he, that *my* arm could revenge my ſiſter's wrongs.—Mrs. Villars ſtarted. For heaven's ſake, ſaid ſhe, retract this wild wiſh. What! could you deſert a wife and unborn infant? Would you hazard your life in a guilty enterprize? Would you violate the laws of chriſtianity by indulging a criminal revenge? Would you increaſe your ſiſter's misfortune, by becoming her huſband's murderer?—Oh! my ſon, let me beg of you to reflect, that though he is the cauſe of my daughter's ſufferings, yet this wretched man whom you would devote to deſtruction, is enſlaved by the moſt deplorable ignorance. I grant, that this ignorance renders him liable to puniſhment; but ſince human laws have appointed none for this error, leave him to divine juſtice. Remember who hath ſaid, "Vengeance is

"mine,

« mine, I will repay."——Sir John is rather the object of pity than reſentment. Think for a few moments on the cruelty of wiſhing to conſign him to eternal miſery.—She pauſed a while, then reſumed: You would expoſe to infamy the man to whom your ſiſter has vowed love and obedience, and perhaps by this means would prevent his re-eſtabliſhment in the path of duty. To what fatal raſhneſs might he have recourſe to be removed from the ſcandal of public ignominy! You would be accountable to heaven for abridging his date of life, tho' not the immediate inſtrument of his deſtruction.—Lady Raymond, though the injured ſufferer, ſtill retains a ſincere and tender affection for her huſband, and his infidelity will not releaſe her from an obſervance of her vows.—Let us, my ſon, attend at preſent wholly to the recovery of your ſiſter's health, and when that is reſtored, it is our duty calmly to conſider on the moſt eligible method of reclaiming

ſir

ſir John, or to deliberate on the proper means of a final ſeparation.——We will leave you to reflect on what I have urged, and I hope reaſon will entirely ſubdue paſſion.

As we found lady Raymond aſleep, I took up my pen to give you this recital.

* * * * *

Reaſon *has* prevailed. Mr. Villars, on our return, eagerly ſeized his mother's hand; You are indeed, ſaid he, my guardian angel. My heart recalls its dreadful wiſh, and tho' it bleeds for my ſiſter's wrongs, yet I will commit her cauſe to Heaven, who in its own time will revenge perjury and ingratitude. Mrs. Villars embraced him with a tranſport too exquiſite to find adequate words. At the inſtant my woman came down, and told us lady Raymond was awake, that ſhe found herſelf better, and intreated to ſee us all, for ſhe knew her brother was below. My friend

could

could only utter, Oh! God! if it be thy will, preſerve her to us!

* * * *

Mr. Villars, on finding his ſiſter better, was impatient to bring hither his lady. Soon after he had left us for that purpoſe, Mrs. Villars was called down. She had left us near half an hour, when I was ſent for. I was never more ſurprized than when, on entring the dining-room, I ſaw ſir John Raymond kneeling at my friend's feet. No, madam, ſaid he, I will not riſe till you pardon, and promiſe to permit me to ſee my injured wife. Plead for me, Lady Egerton. Mrs. Villars's cheeks were ſuffuſed with a crimſon glow. You diſtreſs me, ſir John, ſaid ſhe; I *do* pardon you, but I am fearful your preſence ſhould have a fatal effect on my daughter. Alas! if you are really ſincere (and God only can know the ſecrets of the heart) how will you be affected! In all human probability, a few days are all ſhe has to live!

Sir

Sir John appeared much affected. Surely, cried he, I have been in a delirium! but let me inſtantly ſee the dear ſufferer. He then aroſe, and went towards the door. Mrs. Villars ſtopt him; For my child's ſake, exclaimed ſhe, let me firſt prepare her. Lady Egerton, be ſo good as to ſtay with ſir John till I return.

When we were alone, his confuſion increaſed, yet did not prevent him from condemning his paſt conduct. I could not forbear telling him, I hoped his future good behaviour would recompence his lady's ſufferings, if—I added, her life was granted to our prayers. I ſaw he expected to find her leſs dangerouſly ill than we gave him reaſon to hope; and I did not ſay any thing to alter his opinion, in hopes his remorſe would be heightened on ſeeing her, and tend to confirm his better reſolutions.

Mrs. Villars returned. Though I cannot deny your requeſt, ſir John, ſaid ſhe,

I am

I am afraid of bad conſequences from indulging it. You muſt not ſtay long with her, nor permit her to talk much.

Sir John's impatience ſcarcely ſuffered him to attend to Mrs. Villars. We followed, and entered the apartment with him. Lady Raymond ſat up in her bed, ſupported by pillows. Sir John was viſibly ſhocked on ſeeing her. He threw himſelf on his knees by the bed ſide, and kiſſing her hand, which ſhe extended to him, Can you pardon the injurious treatment you have received? ſaid he, tenderly.

Oh! my huſband, anſwered the ſweet creature, throwing her arms round his neck, do I live to ſee you once again? Mrs. Villars, apprehenſive this effuſion of delight might overcome her daughter's ſpirits, and yet, unwilling to diſturb their happineſs, ſtood gazing on them in anxious ſilence. They remained ſeveral minutes in this ſituation, till lady Raymond, in a weak voice, cried out, 'Tis too

much

much for me!—Then, withdrawing her arms, her head reclined, and ſhe fainted. Mrs. Villars flew to her aſſiſtance, and entreated ſir John to accompany me down ſtairs. His affliction deeply affected me. He leaned his head upon his hand, and his ſobs were audible.

* * * * * *

Mrs. Villars came to inform us that lady Raymond was recovered from her ſwoon, and that ſhe had received a note from her ſon, to excuſe his return till the next morning, on account of an engagement with a fellow collegian who left town that night. He deſired a particular information of his ſiſter by the ſervant, and Mrs. Villars is retired to write. There is a pleaſing alteration in lady Raymond's looks; but her tender parent, to prevent her farther diſcompoſure, has inſiſted on her not talking. Young Mrs. Villars is here and ſhares our joy.

* * * * * *

Lady

Lady Raymond is better. My friend's hopes of her child's recovery are expreſſed in lively terms in the following little billet.

MY DEAR SON,

We now indulge a joyful expectation of my beloved Flavia's re-eſtabliſhed health; and a circumſtance that has happened ſince I ſaw you, tends to promote our wiſhes for her lengthened life, as we have now reaſon to hope, that ſhe will enjoy with added years, a large ſhare of temporal happineſs. My daughter Villars is with us, and joins her requeſt with mine, that we may, if poſſible, ſee you here this evening. I want to give an explanation of the enigma, my note will contain. Your ſiſter's recovery, and your compliance with a requeſt I ſhall make to you, will confirm the happineſs of

Your and her tenderly affectionate mother,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

* * * * * *

What cannot Mrs. Villars's conſummate wiſdom effect! She has reconciled the two brothers. Indeed, ſir John's penitence entitles him to Mrs. Villars's forgiveneſs.

Lady Raymond has ſat up a quarter of an hour. She is now diſpoſed for ſleep, and we have left her for the night. At this delightful juncture I will conclude my letter. I ſhall write another to-morrow, when I hope to confirm the ſatisfaction this will excite.

I am, with love to your worthy huſband,

Your ever affectionate mother,

E. EGERTON.

LETTER LXXXII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

OH! my dear, how weak are the foundations of human happineſs! Lady Raymond is much worſe. Doctor W——'s looks alarm me. From the moſt flattering

hopes of her life, we are now ſunk in the deepeſt anxiety, and endeavour only to prepare ourſelves for her hourly-expected death.

After I had ſealed up and ſent away my letter, my woman came running to tell me that lady Raymond's joy, on ſeeing ſo perfect a reconciliation between her huſband and brother, prevented her taking any reſt for ſome time, and that the affecting ſcenes ſhe had ſhared that day were too much for her. That ſhe had talked very wildly, and her fever ſeemed to be returned. She was then in a ſlumber, but ſtarted frequently, and appeared greatly diſordered. Mrs. Villars came in while my woman was with me, and gueſſed by our looks that lady Raymond was not ſo well as when we left her. I owned it. We went to her apartment, and were convinced ſhe was very bad. Doctor W—— was ſummoned. He ſhook his head and gave us no hopes. She awaked extremely deli-

rious, and knew none of us. Sir John is almoſt diſtracted. Even my friend indulges a moſt poignant affliction. I never ſaw her ſo much affected.—But no wonder, when ſuch a change ſucceeds to the moſt enlivening hopes.

Mr. Villars is juſt gone up. He came without his lady, being eager to ſee lady Raymond. As I was the only perſon below in the dining room, I was obliged to diſcloſe to him the melancholy alteration. I cannot deſcribe his concern!

* * * * * * *

Gracious God! Lady Raymond is dying! She is in violent convulſions!

* * * * * * *

Her ſenſes are returned, but Doctor W—— aſſures us ſhe can live only a few minutes. She is ſpeechleſs. She has embraced us all.—Her huſband and brother are kneeling by the bed ſide, holding each a hand. My friend ſupports her daughter's head. Their eyes are frequently fixed on

each other, and their language is inexpreſſibly affecting.

* * * * * * *

All is over!——Lady Raymond has breathed her laſt!——

I can only add, I am

Yours affectionately,

E. EGERTON.

LETTER LXXXIII.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

MY DEAR CHILD,

I Now reſume my melancholy recital. Mrs. Villars, who received her daughter's laſt looks, ſunk upon the bed in a ſtate of inſenſibility. When ſhe revived we left the room. Our grief has yet been only expreſſed by ſighs and tears. No one has diſturbed the awful ſilence.

* * * * *

Lady Raymond it ſeems had always expreſſed a deſire of being buried near her father, and ſir John has conſented to it. To-morrow morning he and Mr. and Mrs. Villars

Villars are to ſet out to attend the corpſe. My friend, who is very much indiſpoſed, has promiſed to be with me; but ſhe will not leave the houſe till her daughter's remains are depoſited in the hearſe, when ſhe will remove in a cloſe chair.

Young Mrs. Villars deplores her ſiſter's death with genuine proofs of friendſhip. As to my friend, not one murmur of her's has arraigned the goodneſs of Providence. She mourns with the reſignation of a true Chriſtian. She has all the reality without affecting the parade of affliction. She feels all the tenderneſs without the extravagance of ſorrow. She frequently viſits the breathleſs clay, but the ſight of it does not betray her into any vehemence of anguiſh. Sir John, Mr. Villars and I accompany her. It is a moſt pleaſing corpſe. A ſweet ſerenity overſpreads the features. She looks as if only in a gentle ſlumber. We do not permit young Mrs. Villars to ſee her ſiſter on account of her own condition.

* * * * * *

The corpse is placed in its last awful receptacle, and Mrs. Villars has given it the last embrace.—The hearse is now at the door.——The two gentlemen propose being with us again on Monday.

* * * * *

The melancholy equipage is departed, and my friend is preparing to leave this house. She is really very ill.—Young Mrs. Villars has obtained permission from her father to attend her mother-in-law.

* * * * *

Hanover-Square.

Mrs. Villars on her arrival was obliged to go to bed. She is very feverish, and Doctor W—— has prescribed bleeding. I will not finish my letter yet, as I hope to give you a more pleasing information to-morrow.

* * * * *

Sunday.

I have not been able to write till now. My dear friend has been dangerously ill,

and

and we were terribly alarmed, but, thanks to Providence, her fever has left her, and ſhe has only to recruit her ſtrength. Young Mrs. Villars inſiſted on ſitting up with her, and has ſhewn ſuch aſſiduous tenderneſs, that I hope ſhe will greatly contribute to reſtore her mother's tranquillity. My friend ſaid yeſterday, when her daughter-in-law offered her ſomething to take, Come, my child! methinks my Flavia ſtill lives in my Iſabella!

* * * * * * *

Monday night.

The gentlemen are returned, and Mrs. Villars received them with that fortitude which diſtinguiſhes her from the reſt of her ſex. She has ſat up all this day, and ſeems to have regained ſome degree of her uſual ſerenity.

The remains of lady Raymond were depoſited near her father, as ſhe deſired. The whole village and neighbourhood attended the funeral, which was conducted

with the utmoſt decency and propriety. A genuine concern for her death was univerſally expreſſed. The tender mother enquired into every particular; not, ſhe ſaid, to encreaſe her affliction, but to admit ſome motive of conſolation from a certainty that her dear child's wiſhes were complied with. When Mr. Villars told her how much lady Raymond was lamented, I needed not theſe teſtimonies, ſaid ſhe, to convince me my Flavia was beloved. She was the joy of every heart, and ſhe is happy. I do not repine, lady Egerton, my child is happy!

As young Mrs. Villars expects her lying-in will be in about two months, my friends determine to leave us within a fortnight.

I will no longer delay to ſend away my letter, for your impatience muſt have a mixture of inquietude.

I am, my dear child,

Your's moſt affectionately,

E. EGERTON.

LETTER LXXXIV.

Lady EGERTON to Mrs. STAMFORD.

I Can now inform you, my dear daughter, that Mrs. Villars has perfectly recovered her health, and *appears* always with a decent chearfulneſs. She frequently mentions lady Raymond, and without tears. She weeps when alone. As to ſir John, he ſeems to be relapſing into irregularity. We ſee little of him. I hinted my fears to Mrs. Villars. She ſhook her head. I am afraid, lady Egerton, ſaid ſhe, you are not miſtaken. My ſon gives me reaſon to think ſir John is culpable.

* * * * * *

I have an additional ſubject for admiration of my excellent friend! A letter was brought to her this morning, and ſhe was told, that the bearer would call the next day for an anſwer. Mrs. Villars did not know the writing, but on glancing her eye over the contents ſhe burſt into tears,

tears, exclaiming, Poor guilty creature! what can I do for thee? After an attentive perusal she gave me the letter. It was signed M. Jewson, and dated from the Marshalsea prison. These were the contents.

Honoured Madam,

My misfortune is too much the consequence of my guilt, to entitle me to your favour; you were deceived in my disposition. It was not love for lady Raymond, but for sir John's valet, that occasioned my desire of living with her. He deluded me. Sir John, soon after our arrival in town, made me proposals, which my vanity tempted me to accept. I became careless, and even insolent to my lady, whose mildness was not provoked. I triumphed in her declining health, for I had hopes sir John would raise me to her place; and as to my first lover, he had deserted me. But I need not be so particular. My

lady

lady gave me one day a deſerved rebuke, at which I was ſo incenſed that I vowed revenge. I told ſir John ſhe had expoſed him; and he, being fearful Mr. Villars ſhould diſcover to the world the injuries offered to his ſiſter, left the houſe, taking me with him. I had attracted the notice of lord B——, and finding ſir John was leſs prodigal than uſual, I ſent a note to lord B—— in his abſence. He came immediately into my terms. I therefore abandoned ſir John, and became miſtreſs to my lord. His ſudden death in a duel, occaſioned by a diſpute at cards, deprived me of all reſource. I was turned out of doors by his ſiſter. I took private lodgings, and was afraid of ſtirring out, leſt my creditors ſhould diſcover me. One of them actually arreſted and threw me into this priſon. The reſt have brought in their claims. I have parted from every farthing, and diſpoſed of every thing but the cloaths on my back. My debts ſtill

amount

amount to 15*l.* I have had propoſals from ſeveral gentlemen, which I have rejected, for I have had time for reflection, and am truly penitent. I have applied to my father and mother; they have forgiven, but cannot aſſiſt me. My ſiſter, who lives in Kent, has promiſed to procure me a place, and to take me down with her; but ſhe has ſeveral children, and can do nothing towards my enlargement. She will conſider me as one of her children 'till I am provided with a ſervice, if I can obtain my liberty. May I, madam, preſume to hope for your forgiveneſs and aſſiſtance? Will you advance the money for me? My poor father and mother deſerve your goodneſs, and I will conſider this inſtance of your bounty as done out of regard to them. For my own part, I can only plead the ſincerity of my repentance to gain your mercy. Be aſſured, I will prefer beggary and impriſonment to farther infamy.

My

My ſiſter will be the bearer of this, and call again to-morrow for your anſwer. Oh! madam, your pardon is neceſſary to my peace, and the excellence of your character encourages my hopes that you will relieve the diſtreſſes of

The truly penitent,

and your ever devoted,

M. JEWSON.

Well, madam, ſaid I, what will you do? Will you give any thing to a wretch who has occaſioned the death of your daughter?—Ah! lady Egerton, anſwered Mrs. Villars, I acknowledge ſhe has been criminal, but is ſhe not a repentant ſufferer? To God ſhe is accountable for her guilt, and God is merciful to the contrite heart. I ſhall not ſupport a criminal, but relieve a penitent. She has refuſed the wages of vice, and ſhe has a right to the pecuniary advantages of virtue. Sir John contributed to her depravity, and would perhaps procure

cure her releaſe; but I would not expoſe either of them to ſo dangerous a trial.

I admired her in ſilence, for indeed I could not expreſs my ſentiments.

* * * * * *

My friend has written an anſwer, which I begged leave to peruſe, and have tranſcribed for you.

Mrs. Jewſon,

I muſt acquieſce in your opinion, that your misfortune is a conſequence of your fault. May you never experience any further puniſhment! My reſentment ought not to continue longer than your guilt. Real penitence certainly reſtores you to divine favour, and will be ſupported by the aſſiſtance of the virtuous. 'Tis true, you have been the occaſion of my affliction, but you have deceived and injured *yourſelf* more than me, and I moſt heartily forgive you. I will ſend the money you requeſt, and add five guineas for cloaths, &c. to

accommodate

accommodate you for a new place. Perſevere in your virtuous purpoſes, and Providence will protect you. I am

Your ſincere friend,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

If Jewſon be not perfectly reformed after this goodneſs, I ſhall think her quite incorrigible. This is true charity! This is exalted benevolence! Never did I hear of ſuch a woman as this!

* * * * * *

I expect Mr. Leiceſter, Mrs. Griffin, and the amiable pair, to ſpend this day with us. How ſhall I part from this family. In loſing Mrs. Villars I ſhall more ſeverely lament the death of lady Raymond.

I believe I ſhall ſoon pay you and Mr. Stamford a viſit. I am impatient to ſee you both, and to nurſe the dear babe.

Believe me, my dear daughter,

Your's moſt affectionately.

LETTER LXXXV.

Mrs. VILLARS to Sir JOHN RAYMOND.

DEAR SIR,

THE advice of an old woman may be deemed impertinent, but it cannot be termed ſelf-intereſted, any otherwiſe than as it is the real intereſt of every perſon to perform what they think a duty.—It is not a mother anxious for the happineſs of her child, who now exhorts you to ſupport the character of a man of true honour. It is the friend ſolicitous to ſecure your preſent and future peace who ventures to admoniſh, where perhaps ſhe has no right to reprove. You are releaſed from the conjugal tyes, which enjoined a ſtrict fidelity, and probably may imagine yourſelf to be at liberty to devote all your hours to pleaſure; but conſider, ſir, can ſuch indulgence be conſiſtent with that divine law, which teaches us to love our neighbours as ourſelves? If you are the betrayer of in-

 nocence,

nocence, you are accountable to God for the violation of virtue, for deſtroying the peace of families, and perhaps for the future guilt and infamy of the deluded ſufferers. Inſtead of ſupporting by your example, laws inſtituted for the public good, you act in defiance of them, and not only commit, but encourage guilt. You owe a ſtrict conformity to human ordinances as a member of the community, and a ſteady adherence to divine precepts, as a profeſſor of chriſtianity.—I know there are an unhappy ſet of females, who are conſidered as the proper objects of paſſion. Who can then releaſe them from the ſeveral duties they owe to God, their fellow creatures, and themſelves? Are *they* excluded from the benefits of the Chriſtian diſpenſation? Does not *their* penitence entitle them to mercy, and are not thoſe perſons obnoxious to the divine vengence, who contribute to perpetuate their crimes and miſery?

I have urged some of the claims of duty. Permit me to mention another, the neglect of which, has frequently a more alarming, though not more destructive consequence. An attention to the preservation of health, of fortune, and of character, is not only essential to our true happiness, but to the enjoyment of pleasure. We must be rational beings, if we would protract our relish for amusements. The wise Author of our nature has made vice the parent of misery, and virtue a constant source of the most delightful sensations.

I cannot conclude without an apology for the liberty I have taken in offering my advice. Yet, sir, when you consider that friendship dictates to my pen, the motive will, I hope, plead in my favour. I shall exceedingly rejoice if my cautions are unnecessary; for be assured, sir, I am

Your sincerely affectionate friend,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER LXXXVI.

Mrs. VILLARS to Lady EGERTON.

PERMIT me, dear madam, to offer my grateful acknowledgements for those uncommon inſtances of friendſhip, all my family have received from your ladyſhip. My heart is affected with a more lively ſenſe of them than words can expreſs.

My daughter-in-law (alas! that diſtinction is no longer neceſſary) was very little incommoded by the journey. She and my ſon deſire you would accept their thanks, and moſt reſpectful compliments.

The firſt ſight of this place revived melancholy ideas; yet, my dear lady Egerton, I do not wiſh to recall my child to this life. Sir John moſt probably would have relapſed into indifference. Heaven rewards her ſuffering virtue, and I am perfectly reſigned to its diſpenſations.

My long abſence from home increaſes my preſent avocations. To ſuch a friend

apologies for ſhort letters are needleſs. I ſincerely wiſh your ladyſhip a pleaſant journey into Northamptonſhire, and beg you would preſent our beſt reſpects to Mr. and Mrs. Stamford.

I am, dear madam,

Your faithful, affectionate, and moſt obliged humble ſervant,

SOPHIA VILLARS.

LETTER LXXXVII. and laſt.

Mrs. VILLARS to Lady EGERTON.

DEAR MADAM,

AFTER ſuffering a dreadful anxiety, I am enabled, by the goodneſs of the Deity, to impart to your ladyſhip ſome degree of the joy we feel on my dear daughter Villars's ſafe delivery, and the additional bleſſing of a fine boy. Her reſignation in the ſevereſt conflicts has endeared her to me, whilſt my ſon's apprehenſions and tender extacy have convinced me, his love is of an exalted and permanent nature.

ture. After enduring a reſtleſs uneaſineſs for a day and night (all which time ſhe was thought to be in extreme danger) ſhe received the information of her ſafety with equal tranſports of delight. I ſhall never forget the tenderneſs with which he claſped her to his breaſt. She returned the embrace, and looking at the innocent babe, ſeemed to claim for him a ſhare of her huſband's affection. Parental joy ſparkled in his eyes. He gazed on the ſweet infant, gently kiſſed it, and again, by eloquent careſſes, thanked the partner of his heart for the dear preſent. Methought I ſaw my huſband revived in my ſon. I ſhared their happineſs, and though I dropt a tear in remembrance of my Flavia, my ſatisfaction was unimbittered by regret.

My daughter Villars's attentive obſervation of her little babe's actions, expreſs all the mother's fondneſs. She has entered upon the delightful office of nurſe. Every feature is animated by an heightened con-

jugal affection, and her eyes glisten with maternal softness. My son is seldom absent from his Isabella. He reads, he converses on some pleasing subject, or he nurses the sweet object of his future joys and cares. Both my dear children support themselves on this summit of earthly felicity, with such pious gratitude, and equanimity of soul, as render them deserving of the blessings providence has bestowed on them.

"I have not had a line from sir John Raymond; but Mr. Leicester informs us, that even in an incessant pursuit of pleasure, he is the most miserable of human beings. Poor infatuated man!—But whilst I lament his unhappy delusion, I am thankful for the appointment of Heaven in releasing my dear child from farther sufferings.

* * * * *

"Good God! what a letter have I received! O madam, sir John Raymond is no more. Read the inclosed, and join with

me

me in compaſſion, and acquieſcence to the will of Heaven.

MADAM,

"I dare not addreſs you by any epithet "expreſſive of the character you once per- "mitted me to bear. My mind is a per- "fect chaos of horror!—I am the wretched "victim of my own intemperance.—I am "mortally wounded in a duel fought in "defence of the moſt worthleſs of her "ſex, after having injured the moſt ami- "able. I reſented aſperſions which my "conduct had incurred; and, in a fit of "frenzy, drew my ſword upon a fellow "whom I expected to have terrified by its "appearance. But he knew too well the "character of his antagoniſt; and aſſiſted "by a wretch who diſhonours the name of "woman, in a moment diſarmed and "wounded me.—Good God! what an in- "conſiſtent creature is man! To hazard "the ſacrifice of life in defence of the "honour he has abuſed, and for the pre-

"servation of a character he has forfeited!
"But alas! these reflections are ill-timed.
"—My surgeon assures me I can live but a
"very little time. Before this reaches
"you, I shall perhaps be arraigned at the
"awful tribunal of divine justice!—Oh!
"madam, can you forgive the author of
"your sufferings? And will an equitable,
"and good God receive to his mercy the
"wretch who defied his justice? Can I
"distinguish the dread of punishment from
"the contrition of sincere penitence?
"How shocking is uncertainty, when an
"eternity of happiness or misery is the al-
"ternative! May my example be a warn-
"ing to the inconsiderate many, never
"to delay the task of repentance! I was
"apprehensive of present suffering, and
"have consigned myself—O God! (how
"dreadful the thought) to an everlasting
"state of misery!—I am on the brink of
"Eternity.—Farewel!—I fear for ever.—"

Oh!

"Oh! lady Egerton, what a deplorable catastrophe is unhappy man! may his penitence be accepted at the throne of mercy! I forgive, I deplore the self-condemned martyr to his vices. His servant brought me a parcel, which contained his will. I find he had bequeathed to me the remains of his shattered fortune, as some compensation (he expressed it) for the sufferings he had occasioned to me and his injured wife. I burnt the will immediately, as I have lately discovered, that his nearest relation, and heir at law, is in very distressful circumstances, has a large family, and is a very valuable character.—Can I ever lament my daughter's early death? Dear lady Egerton, how inscrutable are the ways of Providence! We can never religiously call any event an evil. If then we feel some of the afflictions incident to mortality, let us not only remember how little we deserve from the Deity (who yet corrects, like a kind parent, for our amend-

ment)

ment) but alſo, that though we cannot command events, it is always in our power, from every event to derive ſome advantage. I muſt for ſome time quit my pen.

* * * * * * *

I reſume the pleaſing ſubject. My ſon's tender and reſpectful aſſiduity to pleaſe me is increaſed, and my daughter is a counterpart of my deceaſed child. I muſt add, in juſtice to Mrs. Villars, that with lady Raymond's ſoft complacency of manners, ſhe poſſeſſes that fortitude and dignity of ſoul, which perhaps would have ſupported *her* in the arduous trial to which my Flavia was unequal.—To convince you of my preſent ſerenity, I incloſe an Ode to death, which I finiſhed this day. I wiſh the poetry was more adapted to the ſublimity of the ſubject, but I ſubmit it to your candour.

If, madam, the ſociety of three tender parents, whoſe happineſs is truly domeſtic, will be pleaſing to *you*, the ſweets of your friendſhip

friendship will vary and heighten our delights. We claim the performance of your ladyship's promise to my daughter, of being a sponsor to her child, and hope Mr. and Mrs. Stamford will soon accompany you into Essex. If her dear babe is not too young for a traveller, little Frederick invites him to his nursery.

It is more than a week since I began this letter. My daughter and my grandchild delightfully divide my time. I acknowledge, and enjoy the bounties of heaven. Religion is the foundation of acquiescence and content. I consider that my Flavia has obtained an early admission into the regions of bliss; and whilst I anticipate the joys of being partaker with her of endless felicity, I am animated to a performance of the duties of my present station.

Come, dear madam, and congratulate in person

Your truly affectionate, and ever grateful

SOPHIA VILLARS.

IV.

(Inclosed in the foregoing.)

An ODE to DEATH.

I.

OH Death! whose arbitrary hand
No human power can e'er withstand,
I bend beneath thy rod!
And whilst I own thy shaft severe,
Whilst wounded nature drops a tear,
My soul! resign to God!

II.

No more each mind-expressive grace
Depicted on my Flavia's face
Shall charm a parent's sight;
When Death the tender frame invades,
How soon the roseate blossom fades,
And shrinks beneath the blight!

III.

Greatness! the echo of a name!
On gales of popular acclaim,
What vot'ries fill thy shrine!
Rais'd to the zenith of their power,
They blaze the meteors of an hour,
Then fall, no more to shine!

IV.

IV.

Ah! ſee the mockery of ſtate!
The laſt ſad leaves of the great!
The pageantry of death!
In ſable pomp the victim lies,
A ſpectacle for vulgar eyes,
The ſport of vulgar breath!

V.

Say, what avails the ſculptur'd bust,
The honours paid to putrid duſt,
The venal Poet's lays?
Virtue diſdains the forms of art,
She lives in records of the heart,
Beſt monuments of praiſe!

VI.

Behold life's cloſing ſcene diſplay'd,
How vain the gew-gaws of parade!
Th' appendages of wealth!
Art has exhauſted all her power,
She can't revive the drooping flower,
Nor tint the bloom of health!

VII.

What horrors fill the guilty mind,
(Whoſe joys with life muſt be reſign'd)

When

When Death's dread ſhaft is nigh!
Life flits away on flutt'ring wing,
'Tis Vice that arms the tyrant's ſting,
Impels the heart-felt ſigh.

VIII.

Whilſt the ſmooth ſtream of pleaſure glides,
Whilſt life rolls on in rapid tides,
Hope gilds each riſing morn!
Whilſt every zephyr breathes perfumes,
Whilſt every path with roſes blooms,
We fear no latent thorn.

IX.

Adverſity, with poignant dart,
By wounding, purifies the heart,
Expels each baleful weed;
She prunes each wild luxuriant ſhoot,
Her ſcion bears the noble fruit
Of Virtue's heavenly ſeed.

X.

My ſoul! arreſt each anxious thought;
Affliction's rigid ſchool had taught
My Flavia's mind to ſoar;
Taught her, ſuperior to her fate,
With Faith's firm eye t' explore the ſtate
Where pain ſhall be no more.

XI.

Shall *Stoicks* boast their mental art,
Shall they, O Death! defy thy dart,
Repel each shaft of woe?
And can the Christian want support?
To him whose Saviour is his fort,
Is Death a dreaded foe?

XII.

Though conscious virtue can dispense
A bliss beyond the joys of sense,
A genuine heart-felt glow;
Yet know, fond man with pride elate,
Vain is thy vaunted happy state,
Whose bliss is fix'd below!

XIII.

If Death this vital spark destroys,
Ev'n virtue's self-rewarding joys
Are fleeting as our breath!
The *Christian* seeks a nobler prize,
The grave's his passport to the skies,
His triumph over Death!

FINIS.